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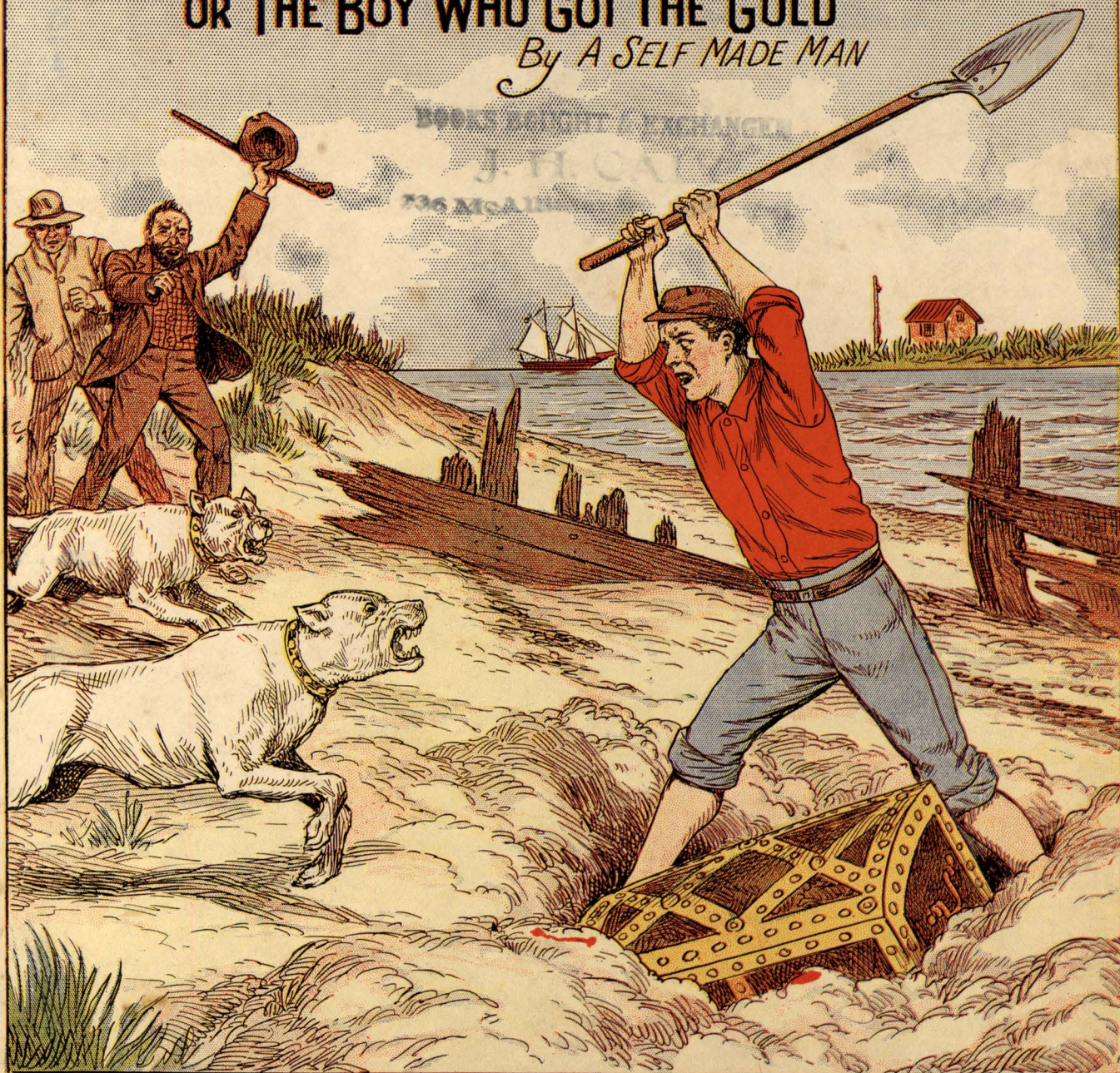
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# FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

## PLAYING A LONE HAND: OR THE BOY WHO GOT THE GOLD

*By A SELF MADE MAN*



"Go for him, Tige! Sic him, Major!" cried the man with the stick. The dogs dashed forward, and Tige made a spring at Joe. The boy swung his spade in the air and brought it down on the animal's head.



# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# PLAYING A LONE HAND

OR,

## THE BOY WHO GOT THE GOLD

By A SELF-MADE MAN

### CHAPTER I.

SAM SMITH HAS SOMETHING TO SAY TO HIS FATHER.

"Say, dad, you seem to have taken a shine to that peddler who's been hangin' around this village for a week past," said Sam Smith, a freckle-faced, weather-browned youth of fifteen years.

"You mean Peter Marks? Well, s'pose I have, what of it?" replied Jacob Smith, a dealer in marine stores and general ship chandlery, whose store, in front of which father and son were standing, faced the inlet upon the shore of which the village of Seaport was situated.

Once upon a time this Maine village had been a port of some consequence in the coasting trade, numerous sloops and schooners plying between it and Boston, as well as Portsmouth in New Hampshire; but that was so long ago that only the graybeards recalled it.

Still, Seaport wasn't altogether a has-been, for it still boasted a small fleet of fore-and-afters that carried shingles, finished lumber and tubs of salted mackerel to Boston.

It was this trade that Jacob Smith flourished on, for he was the only dealer in ship chandlery in the place, and as the coasters were continually running out of odds and ends in his line of business, the masters of the vessels came to him to make good the deficiency.

The business had come to Jacob from his father, who made hay during the golden era of the coasting business, together with a considerable sum of money in the village bank, therefore, though trade wasn't anywhere near what it once was, the ship chandler was pretty well fixed in this world's goods.

No stranger would have thought so from his appearance and mode of living.

He might easily have lived in one of the best houses of

the village, and put on some style, had his tastes run that way, but they didn't.

He hankered after the mighty dollar with as much eagerness as though he saw visions of the poor-house in the near distance, and lived over his shop, as his father had done before him, and as tradition said his grandfather had, too.

Sam was his only son, and, considering his years, was just as smart as his old man, perhaps a little smarter in some respects, for the rising generation these days seem to have it on the old folks in more ways than one.

Sam was not particularly popular in the village, for he was something of a bully, and was happiest when teasing the girls he knew, browbeating smaller boys, or those of a timid nature, or swapping personal belongings.

At the latter game he had the average Yankee beaten to a standstill.

With all his drawbacks he had his virtues, and one of these was a natural keenness that he had inherited from both of his parents.

In answer to his father's question he said:

"Well, I don't like the cut of his jib."

Sam's talk had a nautical flavor, from being constantly thrown in with sailors and others connected with the sea.

"Oh, you don't?" sneered his father, who did not seem to be in sympathy with his son at that moment.

"No, I don't," said Sam, flatly. "It's my opinion his peddling business is only a blind."

"A blind!—for what?"

"Who knows but he's a revenue officer in disguise?"

"Stuff and nonsense! He ain't nothin' but a peddler. Ain't he got a wagon full of notions at the inn, and doesn't he go 'round among the women folks sellin' 'em every day?"

"Why wouldn't he if he's pretendin' to be a peddler? I've watched him, and I've noticed that he doesn't drive slick bargains like peddlers I've seen before. He sells his



goods so cheap that he ain't makin' his salt. He doesn't look like a fool to me, but nobody except a fool, or a man who had some other axe to grind, would carry on business the way he's doin'."

"You're too suspicious, Sam."

"I ain't no more suspicious than you are generally. You often told me since we went into the smug——"

"Do you want to ruin me, you young swab?" cried the ship chandler, in a hoarse whisper, clapping one of his hands across his son's mouth and choking him off.

"There ain't no one around to hear me," said Sam.

"How do you know there ain't?"

"I've got eyes, I guess, I can see."

The building stood by itself, the end of the house at the foot of Main street, with a bit of ground in the rear, devoted to the cultivation of vegetables.

It was two stories in height, with a large doorway on the ground floor, flanked on either side by a window, in which was displayed samples of Mr. Smith's stock in trade.

The living apartments were above, on one floor, like a modern flat, but without any of the conveniences of a flat, and to reach them you had to ascend by an outside stairway to a landing and a door.

Before the building stood a huge coil of rusty chain cable, which had stood there as long as the oldest inhabitant could remember, and close by lay a good-sized anchor.

Jacob Smith, to make sure there were no concealed listeners about, walked to the upper and lower corner of the building.

He didn't think of looking inside the coil of chain cable, which had a hollow center.

If he had he would have discovered that it had an occupant.

"I s'pose you're satisfied, dad?" said Sam, with a grin.

"I'm afraid that baggy tongue of yours will get us in trouble yet," replied the marine store dealer.

"Don't you worry. I never say anythin' about certain things except on the quiet to you. Do you think I'm a fool?"

"What was you goin' to say when I stopped you?"

"I was goin' to say that you've often told me that a person couldn't be too wide-awake when he was doin' somethin' that wouldn't stand the light. Well, you know we're engaged in a side issue that's a pretty risky game, though there's lots of money in it."

"What about it?"

"There's this much about it, a revenue cutter has been up and down the coast for the past six months tryin' to find out where French cognac has been put ashore free of duty."

"I ain't heard that the officers have found out anythin' about it."

"They're goin' to hang on the job till they do find out. Now, it's my opinion that peddler is a revenue man in disguise."

"Nonsense!"

"No, it ain't no nonsense. I say he ain't to be trusted, and you're a fool to be so familiar with him."

"I'm a fool to put up with your gab," said the ship chandler, angrily. "You're makin' a mount'n out of a molehill. You talk to me just as if I didn't know my own

business. I want you to understand that I'm your father, and a sight older than you. When I need your advice I'll ask for it."

"All right. I'll tell marm, and when she learns what I've got to say about that peddler I guess you'll hear from her," said Sam, in a tone of disgust.

"If I hear of you settin' your mother off I'll lick thunder out of you with that strap behind my desk," roared Smith, senior.

"I'll tell marm you threatened me, and then it won't be good for you to lick me," returned Sam, defiantly.

"Confound you——"

"Here comes that peddler now. Why don't you ask him why he's stayin' so long 'round these diggin's? Ask him if he's thinkin' of takin' root here."

With those words Sam backed off into the shop, made his way to the rear, and resumed his interrupted task of picking old bits of rope to pieces to make oakum.

The peddler came up with a large, narrow box covered with water-proof cloth in each hand.

"Hello," he said to the marine store dealer. "It's kinder warm to-day."

He put down his load and began mopping his face with a red bandanna handkerchief.

"It is warm, friend Marks," admitted Jacob Smith. "Come inside and rest yourself. I've got some prime apple-jack in a jug under my desk. You've tasted it before, and said it beat anythin' you ever put under your vest."

"It does. Tastes as if there was a dash of brandy in it."

"Mebbe there is," grinned the ship chandler. "I have a special recipe for preparin' that liquor. There ain't nothin' better of its kind in the State."

"I suppose you wouldn't object to sellin' me a quart jug of it? I'd like to take it away with me when I go."

"Sell it! No, no; I'll give it to you. It's ag'in the law to sell anythin' that savors at all of spirituous licker," said Smith, laughingly.

"Pooh! What's the law got to do with you and me?" said the peddler, confidentially.

"Nothin', I reckon, but I have a great respect for it, seein' as I wouldn't care to get into no trouble with it."

"That's right, but if friends couldn't trust one another it would be a pretty hard world to get along in," said the peddler, slapping him on the back.

"Well, come in and wet your whistle," said Smith, leading the way into his shop.

Peter Marks picked up his boxes and followed him.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE INTERVIEW BETWEEN JACOB SMITH AND THE PEDDLER.

As they disappeared, the head and shoulders of a boy popped up out of the chain cable like a jack-in-the-box.

He was a seedy-looking lad, with a shabby cap on his curly locks.

His face wasn't over clean, like his hands, but it was bright and intelligent.



His name was Joe Sargent, an orphan and wanderer, and, we may as well say, he is the hero of this story.

He looked around to see if his unexpected appearance out of such a peculiar hiding-place had been observed by anybody in the immediate vicinity.

Apparently it had not been, though several men of seafaring appearance were standing around near the wharf at the foot of the street, and two boys were playing mumble-peg on the opposite side of the thoroughfare.

Taking advantage of the chance, Joe Sargent sprang out of the chain coil, and going up to the nearest window, flattened his nose against one of the panes.

Within a few feet of the window he saw Jacob Smith and the peddler, seated on common wooden chairs, drinking and talking.

A two-gallon stone jug stood on the cheap desk in front of them.

It contained the applejack the marine store dealer had referred to.

It was a refreshing drink at most any time, but particularly so on a hot summer day like the one on which our story opens.

The window was partially down from the top, and also up a couple inches from the bottom.

The voices of the two men, whose backs were turned to him, easily reached Joe's ears.

"The flavor of good brandy is unmistakable," said the peddler, as he took the glass from his lips. "I never knew before that applejack could be so vastly improved by the introduction of a little cognac. You got the brandy at the drugstore, I suppose?"

"That's the only place that is allowed by law to sell it in this State," said Smith.

"I know, but I needn't tell you, my friend, that every law made is evaded where possible by people who find it interferes with their interests or pleasures."

"I reckon that ain't no lie. The law makes this a prohibition State as regards spirituous liquors, but that doesn't prevent the people gettin' all they want of the stuff. Instead of takin' it over the bar, they provide themselves with a private supply and drink it on the quiet."

"Precisely. You have only to cross the State line into New Hampshire to get all the liquor you want, and it's a simple matter to bring it to your own door."

"You don't have to go to that trouble. It is kept and sold right in the State. If you know where to get it, and are known to the parties who deal in it, there is no difficulty in gettin' it."

The peddler nodded as if he understood the matter thoroughly.

"Some years ago quite a bit of French cognac was smuggled into the State from the sea by Canadian importers, aided by confederates at different points along the coast, but the Government at Washington nosed the guilty ones out, and put an end to the traffic. Many people made a good thing out of it, I understand, while it lasted, but those most directly interested were heavily fined and went to jail. The lesson seems to have proved a salutary one, for I have not heard that any imitators have since come into the field," said Peter Marks.

"No, I reckon not," said Smith.

"I should think, now that the revenue service has other

matters to look after, some enterprising individual would take a shy at it again, make hay while the sun shone, and then quit before he got caught," said the peddler, carelessly.

"Such a scheme would have to be started by a Dominion importer, and it would be a delicate matter for him to find the right parties in this State to take a hand in it," said the ship chandler with a solemn look.

"I wish there was something of that kind going on," said Marks.

"Why?"

"Because my wagon would afford me a good chance to carry quite a supply around with me. While I sold notions to the women folks, I could supply the farmers and villagers with brandy or champagne below cost," and the peddler winked at Smith.

"If you sold the liquor as cheap as I hear you dispose of your notions, I don't see how you could expect to make much out of it," said Smith, with an intelligent grin.

The peddler seemed taken aback for a moment, and then he laughed.

"So you heard I sell my stock-in-trade remarkably cheap, eh?" he said.

"I've heard you almost give it away, which seems rather singular. I ain't heard of no other peddler who does business on such a liberal basis."

"Nevertheless, I make a very fair profit."

"I don't see how you can."

"That's because you don't understand the business. The stock of notions I am distributing to the wives and daughters, and, incidentally in the cutlery and tobacco line, to the men of this vicinity, I bought at a Boston auction house at a price that would astonish you if I told you how low it was. Those bankrupt sales occur every once in a while. The stuff must be sold at whatever it will bring, and dealers like myself, knowing that, combine and put in ridiculously low bids. The result is we get the goods for a song, far below the regular wholesale figures. There, I've put you on to one of the secrets of our business, which I wouldn't do to everybody, for it might hurt our trade if the truth got out."

Marks spoke with apparent frankness, and it is to be presumed that Jacob Smith was very much enlightened on a subject with which he had not been familiar.

At any rate, it seemed to satisfy him as to the reason why the peddler was able to sell at the small price his son had told him about.

Perhaps it also confirmed his first impression that Peter Marks was not a revenue officer in disguise, as his smart boy suspected.

At any rate, he assumed a more friendly attitude toward Marks than he had done since he came to his shop.

The peddler at once returned to the subject of smuggling liquor, and bewailed the fact that it was no longer in vogue.

"Mebbe it ain't," said Smith, "but between you and me I found out some time ago where several small barrels of cognac had been hidden in the sand not a hundred miles from here by the chaps who used to carry on the trade."

"Is that so?" asked Marks, in a tone of interest. "You're lucky. I suppose you sampled one of the kegs, and I am tasting it now in this applejack."



"More remarkable things than that have happened in this world," said Smith, with a solemn wink.

"Perhaps you could put half of that stock in my way if I was willing to come to your terms?" said the peddler.

"Perhaps I could; but it's ag'in the law, you know," grinned Smith.

"Ho, as I remarked before, what's the law to do with you and me?"

"It might have lots to do with us both if the liquor was traced to us."

"Don't you worry about me, I'll engage to sell all the liquor you can put in my way, and no one will ever be the wiser of it, barring our two selves."

Marks spoke with some energy, like a man who has come to the point at last, after beating around the bush for an opening.

Smith stared at him, not quite satisfied in his mind that he had done the right thing in mentioning that little liquor cache which he said he had accidentally found.

The peddler noticed his indecision, and maybe he thought he had been a bit too precipitate himself.

However, the ice was broken on both sides, and it remained to be seen how matters would end.

"There's only six kegs," ventured Smith, at length, watching the peddler's face out of the corner of his eye.

"Six kegs are something," replied Marks.

"And I ain't got no idea what they're worth—I mean what I ought to charge you for 'em if we made a trade. I never had nothin' to do with the liquor trade, seein' as I'm a ship chandler."

"Oh, we can figure that out," said Marks, encouragingly.

"How can we?" asked Smith, innocently.

"I think I've got an importer's list price of liquors in my wagon. I'll look it up, and we can use it as a basis of a trade. I shall, of course, want to get the brandy at a price that will pay me for the trouble and risk of selling it around the country," said Marks, confidentially.

The ship chandler nodded.

"I suppose the six kegs are still in the sand where you found them?" said the peddler.

Smith nodded again.

"I think if I'd been in your shoes I'd have brought them to your shop and stowed them away out of sight. You don't know but somebody else might find them, and then you'd be out your discovery."

"No fear of anybody else findin' 'em. The parties that hid 'em knew what they were about when they buried 'em."

"Yes, but you found them, you know, and you were not in their confidence," said Marks, tapping him on the chest. "There is no reason why your good fortune should not happen to somebody else."

"I never thought of that," said Smith, apparently not worried over the suggestion.

"Of course you didn't, or you wouldn't have left them there. Suppose you found a chest of gold dollars on the shore somewhere, would you leave it there any longer than you could get it away?"

"I would not," replied the ship chandler, emphatically.

"But that's different. There ain't no law ag'in takin' possession of money if you find it. And that reminds me that

there is a chest of money buried somewhere along the shore between here and the coastguard station."

"How do you know there is?"

"I heard about it when I was a boy. My dad got the story from his old man, who heard it from somebody else."

"How came it to be there?"

"Durin' the War of 1812, a British warship went ashore on the coast and became a total loss. Every soul aboard was lost. The wreck lay there for a long time till the winter storms broke it up, and nothin' remained but the hull, which sunk out of sight in the sand. Years afterward the news leaked out that the vessel was carryin' a chest of gold sovereigns to pay off the soldiers in Jamaica and the other islands where the British had their redcoats, and then folks 'round here got treasure-struck and started diggin' for the money, but they never mounted to nothin', and finally gave it up, and it's laid there ever since."

"And you believe it's there yet?"

"Yes, but I ain't got no more idea of the spot than Adam."

"If it's really there, I daresay it never will be found."

"I'd give somethin' to find it," said Smith, wetting his thin lips with the points of his tongue, as was his habit when he thought of big sums of money. "It would make me a rich man. It's a fine thing to be rich. Everybody takes his hat off to you, and when you die—but I wouldn't want to die for a long time if I found that chest of gold. I'd want to live and count it over and over, and think of all the things I could buy with it. Why, I could buy half the people in the world, body and soul, if I had enough money to go around. At any rate, I'll bet I could buy them revenue people who broke up the smugglin' business."

"Of course you could. There ain't one of them but will shut his eyes to what's going on if the inducement is sufficiently alluring. They're only men, and the Government is not over liberal to them."

"Well, what's the use of talkin' about it—I ain't got no reason to want to buy revenue officers, or anybody else."

"Well, I must be goin'," said Marks, getting up. "I'll drop in and see you this evening, maybe. If not, some time to-morrow. I'm about ready to go on to Rockville, and I should like to take those six kegs of cognac away with me. I'll give you as much for them as I can afford, but you must understand that I'm not in the peddling business for my health, as you seemed to think awhile ago."

The peddler slapped Smith familiarly on the back, thanked him for his hospitality, and, grabbing his boxes, started for the door.

When he got outside, Joe Sargent had vanished from the window, and was making tracks for the back of the building.

### CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE READER LEARNS SOMETHING ABOUT THE HERO.

When Joe reached the back of the ship chandlery shop he found himself near an open window.

The most natural thing in the world was for him to look in, and he did so.



Seated on a low three-legged stool was Sam Smith, industriously engaged in pulling bits of rope apart.

Beside him stood his mother with a sun-bonnet on her head and an arm full of vegetables.

She had just come in from the truck patch.

"I tell you, marm, the first thing we know them revenue sharks will be down on us, and dad will be landed in jail," Sam was saying. "I warned him about that there peddler chap, but he told me to mind my own business, and that when he wanted any of my advice he'd ask for it. Along comes the fellow with his boxes, just as if by accident, and he and dad have been chinnin' together as thick as peas in a pod, over that jug of applejack, for the last twenty minutes. I've been watchin' 'em, and if that peddler hain't got somethin' out of dad it ain't his fault."

"Your father ain't no fool, Sam," said Mrs. Smith, with a glance at the front door, where Jacob Smith was standing as if waiting for a customer to turn up.

"If a person will persist in playin' with edged tools, after he's been warned, what else is he?" asked the boy, bluntly.

"But you don't know whether that peddler is a revenue man in disguise or not."

"I'm willin' to bet he is."

"Allowin' that he is, your father is too smart to let out anythin' that might get him in trouble. Anyway, there ain't none of that cognac which was landed the other night on the premises. It's all buried, your father told me, in the sand near the p'int. Such bein' the case, there ain't no evidence to be got ag'in him, and they don't arrest people unless they've got evidence to prove 'em guilty."

"That's all right, marm, but if dad dropped the least hint that would give the revenue people the idea that he knows anything at all about the business which has been goin' on 'round here for the past six months, a close watch would be kept on us and we wouldn't dare go near them buried kegs. That would bring our business to a standstill, and look at the money we'd lose. The ship chandlery business ain't very lively since many of our customers have been buyin' their stuff in Boston, and it would be a shame to lose the profit on the lick."

"Better lose it than take the chance of bein' ketched," said Mrs. Smith. "I don't see what your father wanted to go into it, anyway, for. We've got money enough, goodness knows, to live on the rest of our days and leave you well provided for even if your father closed up the shop for good."

"S'pose you have got money enough, you can't have too much. It costs more to live nowadays than it ever——"

He stopped and stared at the window with his mouth open.

He had caught sight of Joe's interested face staring in at him and his mother, evidently taking in all that passed between them.

With an exclamation of consternation he jumped to his feet and made a rush for the back door.

When he got there and looked out the eavesdropper was gone.

He dashed around the corner of the building, but Joe was not in sight.

He kept on to the front of the building, expecting to catch sight of the intruder there.

He was disappointed, as Joe had popped into the cheap

restaurant, two doors away, and was ordering a modest meal with the last of his resources.

The reader would perhaps like to know how Joe came to be in Seaport on that warm summer's day.

He came there simply because the village happened to be in his line of march.

He had been working for some months in a fish canning establishment in Rockville, another seaside place much larger than Seaport, but a slack-up in business led to his discharge.

After trying in vain to get something else to do in town, and using up most of his hard-earned surplus, which at no time amounted to a very healthy sum, he had packed his ancient-looking grip and taken to the road, trusting his future to luck.

In the game of life he was playing a lone hand, and it looked very much as if the cards were stacked against him.

The death of his surviving parent had left him stranded on life's rocky shore, and though possessed of a reasonable amount of energy and ambition, the short end of everything came his way.

Nevertheless he was not discouraged by the unsatisfactory outlook, but was quite contented to plug away in the hope that his fortunes would take a turn for the better.

The only things Joe possessed a fair share of were good health and good looks, and, we may add, a happy-go-lucky disposition, which gave him an optimistic view of life in spite of the hard knocks that an unkind fate dealt out to him.

So perhaps Joe wasn't as bad off as he imagined he was.

In any case, he made no mistake in halting at Seaport, as the sequel will show.

He hired temporary lodgings at the cottage of a widow who took a fancy to his bright countenance and engaging ways, and leaving his grip there, started out to hunt up a job.

He was not particular as to what it was so long as there was enough money in it to pay his living expenses.

Anything more than that would go into his sinking fund, which, after paying his landlady a dollar for a week's rent, and expending twenty cents for his breakfast, was reduced to a \$2 bill and some change.

As if hard luck was resolved to floor him with a knock-out blow, he and the \$2 bill parted company in some mysterious way during his morning's search for work, and when he reached the village water-front, and took refuge from the sun inside the coil of heavy chain in front of Jacob Smith's ship chandlery shop, he had only sixty cents left between him and vagrancy.

He had only intended to rest a short time inside his iron bower to ease his tired limbs after his long tramp from Rockville, but the sultry atmosphere, acting on his weariness, sent him into a doze from which he was aroused by the conversation between Sam Smith and his father.

The topic under discussion aroused his interest, for from what he gathered from it the ship chandler and his precious heir appeared to be engaged in the surreptitious business of liquor smuggling, and Joe had seen a poster in Rockville offering a reward by the inspector of the district for information leading to the detection and conviction of any person or persons implicated in receiving and



disposing of French brandy, or other imported liquor, on which the duty had been evaded.

Joe had strict notions as to what was right and wrong.

There was no doubt in his mind that it was very wrong for anybody to cheat the Government out of its rightful dues.

In fact, he could see no difference between cheating the Government and robbing an individual citizen of the republic.

Even aside from the advertised reward, he would have regarded it as his duty to block such a dishonest practice, just as he would have fearlessly butted in to the rescue of an unfortunate he might have seen held up by thieves along the wayside.

Such being his views, he deemed it quite proper to follow up his suspicions concerning the ship chandler by trying to secure evidence against him in any way practicable—hence his eavesdropping tactics.

While Joe sat in the restaurant waiting to be served, he turned over in his mind all that he had lately learned on the outside of the Smith store.

"I wonder if that peddler is a Government agent in disguise, as the ship chandler's son believes he is, or just what he represents himself to be?" thought Joe. "If he is the former I could give him some information that would greatly interest him, for by their own admission the Smiths are interested in the smuggling of foreign liquors into this State. In order to convict them, however, something stronger than my testimony will have to be brought against them. They will have to be caught with the goods. While they keep the goods buried in the sand some distance from their store they are pretty safe. The old man is evidently too foxy to have any of it on his premises. He will have to be caught in the act of digging up. The old woman said it was buried somewhere near the point. Of course she means the end of the inlet on this side. I've a great mind to go down there and hunt for it. If I discovered where it was hidden I could notify the captain of the coast-guard station and he'd take possession of it and turn it over to the Government. Then I would probably get a part of the reward offered by the Inspector of the district. That would come in mighty good, for I'm almost strapped, and jobs seem to be pretty scarce in this village."

Joe's meditations were interrupted by the appearance of the waiter with his dinner, and he tackled the food with the appetite of a very hungry boy.

The meal cost him a quarter, and that reduced his total capital to thirty-five cents.

Clearly it was necessary for him to raise funds somehow or he was likely to go hungry.

Under the circumstances he did not feel that he could afford the time to look for the buried liquor, for the chances were against his finding it.

When he stepped out of the restaurant he looked toward the ship chandlery shop.

Neither Jacob Smith nor his men was in sight.

Joe was particularly glad that the latter was not visible, since the boy had seen his face at the rear window and would be apt to recognize him.

While he stood irresolutely at the door of the eating-house, the picture of a lad who seemed to have nothing to do, a wagon came leisurely down the street.

It was empty and was driven by a young fellow of about his own age in overalls.

The boy in the wagon saw him and hailed him.

"Want to earn a quarter?" he asked.

"Sure," replied Joe, starting eagerly forward.

"Jump in, then," said the other, reining in the horse.

Joe sprang up on the seat and the wagon continued on its way to the water front.

## CHAPTER IV.

### JOE MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF TOM BAKER.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Joe.

"Help me fill up the wagon with a load of sand," was the reply.

"All right. I'm willing to do anything to earn a little money."

"Glad to hear it, for I ain't stuck on shoveling sand myself. What's your name?"

"Joe Sargent."

"My name is Tom Baker and I'm glad to make your acquaintance."

"Baker," said Joe. "I've hired a room for a week of a Mrs. Baker."

"Is that so?" said Tom, in a tone of interest. "That must be my mother, for we are the only Bakers in the village. It was a small cottage on Jessamine street?"

"I don't know the name of the street. I didn't pay any attention to it, but I ain't afraid but I can find the cottage for it had a dove-cote in the back yard."

"That's our place. My mother had a back room to rent."

"I saw the sign out and applied for lodgings."

"I kind of thought you was a stranger in these parts. Just come here, I suppose?"

"Yes, this morning."

"Where did you come from, and what brought you here?"

"I hail from Rockville, where I worked in Richardson's fish canning establishment for the last three months. When business got slow I was laid off. As I couldn't find another job in the town I started to tramp it to Rockland. I got off the right road somehow and came toward the coast without knowing it till I sighted the ocean. There was nothing for me to do but keep on and see where the road led to. It brought me to this village. I didn't intend to stop here, as it didn't look promising, but I happened to stop at a grocery store and the proprietor asked me if I wanted a job. I said I did. He told me that his boy was sick and he'd hire me for a week."

"That was the store on the corner of our street, I suppose?" said Tom.

"Yes. He agreed to pay me four dollars, and told me I could find lodgings down the street. I suppose he meant at your house. At any rate I put up there and returned to the store to go to work. The grocer told me that he was sorry to disappoint me, but he had put a nephew of his to work and so he couldn't use me. So I was left in the lurch; as I had paid your mother for the room for a week I started off to see if I could find something else to do."



"And you hadn't found anything up to the time I saw you in front of the restaurant?" said Tom, as he turned the team up the shore of the inlet.

"No."

"A quarter isn't a whole lot to earn, but it's better than nothing."

"That's right. It will pay for one meal."

"Now that I know you, and feel interested in you, seeing that you are lodging at our house, I'll see if I can't get you something in the way of work."

"I wish you would. I'll be greatly obliged to you, for I'm down practically to bedrock. After paying your mother I had \$2.60 left, enough to carry me through the week, but unfortunately I lost the \$2 bill somehow, and that makes things rather serious with me."

"Don't worry. You shan't go hungry. You can eat at our house. I'll speak to my mother about it when I get home, and it'll be all right."

"That's kind of you, but I have no right to impose myself on you."

"Don't mention it. You're welcome."

"Where are you going for the sand?"

"Out to the Point."

Joe's heart gave a jump.

Here might be a chance to dig around for the hidden barrels of liquor.

"Say, Baker, what do you know about that man Smith who keeps the ship chandlery shop we passed a few minutes ago?"

"What do I know about him? He's one of the oldest inhabitants."

"I should judge he was. He's got a pretty smart son."

"What makes you think he's smart?"

"Perhaps I should call him foxy."

"That's more like it. I don't care a whole lot about Sam Smith. I went to school with him and he wanted to be boss of the coop. After he got licked two or three times he hauled in his horns with fellows of his own size and amused himself with bullying the smaller fry. I don't believe he's got many friends in the village. Chaps of that stamp don't have."

"Have you heard of any liquor smuggling in this neighborhood?"

"Can't say that I have. Some years ago there was a lot of that done at various points along the shore, but it was broken up by the revenue service. There was a story in the papers a month or two ago which said the Government had received information that the practice had been resumed on a small scale, but I haven't heard that anything has come of it. A revenue cutter put in here some weeks ago, but nobody thought anything of that, for it is the regular boat station."

"I saw a poster in Rockville offering a reward for information that would lead to the detection and conviction of liquor smugglers, which I took to be an indication that something in that line was going on."

"Very likely, but I guess it doesn't amount to much. I don't see how smugglers could make a landing without discovery, as the beaches are all patrolled night and day by the coast guard. We used to have quite a number of

wrecks before the life-saving service went into operation, but they are few now; and when one does happen the coast-guard gets out to it in time to save the few people on board."

"Say, I heard that an English warship was wrecked around here somewhere during the War of 1812," said Joe.

"That's right. She went ashore near the Point and everybody was lost."

"They say she carried a box of money intended to pay off the soldiers in the West Indies."

"So I've heard. My father told me that when he was a boy he heard that, years before, a lot of people went treasure hunting at the Point to find that money."

"Did anyone find it?"

"There is no record that anyone did."

"Then the box of treasure must still be buried in the sand."

"I suppose so, if it was on the warship at the time she went ashore."

"I should think somebody would have found it if the beach was all dug over."

"You can't do much in the way of digging below high tide mark, as the tide comes in and goes out twice in twenty-four hours. It takes about five hours for the tide to come in, and then it remains full about an hour. After that it takes five hours for it to go out again, when there is an hour of slack water. So you see if you start digging anywhere below high-water mark you have only a few hours to work in, and you can't accomplish much in that time. When the tide comes in it fills your hole up with sand again, or nearly so, and there you are. Probably that was the reason why the box of treasure was never found. It was too deep in the sand to be reached."

"I see," said Joe. "Your explanation seems to cover the ground. Have you been down here before for sand?"

"Yes. I was down yesterday twice and the day before once."

By this time they were approaching the Point along the hard, white beach.

The tide was high and covered a good part of the shore.

High tide did not occur at the same time every day, but varied about an hour later each day, so that about every six days the tides were reversed.

Tom halted the wagon within a hundred yards of the Point, turned it around and then tossed out a couple of shovels.

"Now then, Sargent, get busy, and show me how fast you can work," he said.

Joe looked around and wondered whereabouts the kegs of liquor were buried, but he couldn't see anything that offered a clue to their presence.

"I guess they must be nearer the Point, or perhaps behind that line of scrub-bushes," he thought.

Then he began to shovel the sand into the wagon from one side while Tom worked away on the other.

In due time they got the wagon loaded as full as Tom judged necessary and stuck their shovels into the heap.

Joe was about to get up on the seat when suddenly came the scream of a young girl from some point beyond the line of bushes.



## CHAPTER V.

## JOE SAVES A FAIR DAMSEL IN DISTRESS.

"Hello, some girl is in trouble," exclaimed Joe, dashing toward the bushes, as the screams were repeated somewhat nearer.

Tom followed after him.

When Joe pushed through the bushes he saw a pretty-looking, fair-haired girl struggling in the arms of a boy, whom he speedily recognized as Sam Smith.

"Here, what's the matter?" asked Joe, as he advanced toward the pair.

"Save me—save me!" cried the girl.

Sam was taken aback by the coming of Joe and he let go of the girl, who at once ran up to the newcomer.

"What's the excitement?" asked Tom, coming up.

"Save me from that boy," exclaimed the girl, grabbing Joe by the arm.

"What was he doing to you?" asked Joe.

"He wanted to kiss me."

"And you didn't want him to?"

"Of course I didn't," she cried, indignantly. "I hate him."

Sam stood at a little distance glowering at the newcomers.

He was mad at their coming on the scene, because he lost a chance he had been coveting for some time.

Ever since he had known Suzette Castle at school he had been soft on her, and though she had repulsed his attentions whenever they came together, he persisted in following her up when the chance offered.

She had come out that afternoon to the Point to cull some flowers that grew in profusion along the edge of a marshy spot behind the line of scrub-bushes.

Sam Smith came out there for an altogether different reason.

The fact was he had followed the wagon, for he was interested in its movements, or rather in the purpose of the two lads who were in it, one of whom he recognized as the chap whose face he had seen through the back window of the ship chandlery shop an hour previous.

When he failed to get a sight of the retreating Joe he had gone back and told his mother that a boy had been looking in on them and listening to their talk.

As they had said things they wouldn't want known to others, Mrs. Smith was not a little anxious when she returned upstairs.

Sam then went to the front and told his father.

The old man got mad and swore that his son's gabby tongue would surely mark their ruin yet, and then he went upstairs to vent the rest of his anger on his wife.

Sam, in the meanwhile, was trying to recall what had passed between him and his mother, and he wondered how much of the talk the eavesdropper had heard.

He had only caught a fleeting look at Joe's face, but he was satisfied the boy did not belong in the village.

That was a bit comforting, and he hoped nothing would come of the matter.

He was sitting in the front of the shop when the wagon

passed by with Tom Baker driving and Joe on the seat beside him.

He identified Joe at once.

He knew that Baker, a former schoolmate, had been fetching sand from the beach for his boss, who was a carpenter and builder, and he wouldn't have given the wagon a second thought if it hadn't been for the fact that Joe was in it.

He had his suspicions concerning Joe's object in going out to the Point on the wagon, so he made up his mind to follow the vehicle.

This he did, keeping out of sight by following an upper path.

Hiding behind the bushes, he saw the two boys start to load the wagon with sand.

He judged that Joe was helping as pay for the ride, and that he intended to remain behind.

Before the wagon was half loaded he spied out Suzette Castle picking flowers.

The sight of the girl drove other matters out of his mind, and he approached her cautiously so as to catch her unawares.

Her pretty sun-burned face never had attracted him quite so much as now, and he made up his mind to kiss her, now that he felt she couldn't escape him.

Suzette, however, caught sight of him in time to beat a hurried retreat, but he was too quick for her to wholly avoid contact with him, and when he grabbed her and demanded a kiss, meaning to take half a dozen while he was about it, she tried to fight him off, and finding she could not do that she began to scream, with the result we have already described.

"You ought to know better than annoy a young lady who doesn't want anything to do with you," said Joe, looking at young Smith.

"Rats!" returned Sam, savagely. "And you ought to know better than to sneak around the backs of people's houses and listen to what they're talkin' about, you swab."

Joe flushed, for the shot hit him hard.

Sam's words clearly showed that the boy knew him.

"You'd better clear out if you don't want to get a trimming," replied Joe.

"Who'll give it to me?" sneered Sam.

"I might do it if you get too gay."

"You! Who are you, anyway? You don't belong in this place."

"How do you know I don't?"

"Aw, shut up."

Sam turned on his heel and walked toward a shanty a short distance off.

"I'm very much obliged to you for coming to my aid," said the girl, regarding Joe, in spite of his shabby appearance, with a favorable eye.

"You're welcome, miss," he replied, much impressed by her charming appearance.

"I'm much obliged to you, too, Tom Baker," she added, turning to Joe's companion.

"Don't mention it, Suzette. Happy to be of service to you," said Tom. "This is my friend, Joe Sargent. Sargent, let me introduce you to Suzette Castle."

The young people bowed and Suzette offered Joe her hand.



"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Castle," said Joe.

"What brought you out here, Suzette?" asked Tom.

The girl told him what her errand was, adding that she had dropped all her flowers when she fled from Sam.

"We'll go back with you and help you find them or pick others," said Joe.

"Thank you; you are ever so kind," said Suzette, with a smile. "If you boys are going back to the village I should like to go with you, for I'm afraid that odious Sam Smith might follow me."

"If you don't mind riding on a wagon filled with sand you may take my place on the seat with Baker," said Joe.

"I might ride up the beach, though I'd just as soon walk behind the wagon," said Suzette, with a little laugh.

"You walk with her, Sargent, and I'll drive on ahead and wait for you at the foot of Main street," said Tom.

"All right, if Miss Castle will accept my company," said Joe, pleased at the idea of walking with the fair girl.

"Why, of course I will," she said, with a sly look in his face.

"I'm afraid I don't look very presentable," he said.

"Oh, I don't mind your looks," she said. "You're in working clothes and are not expected to look spruced up."

Joe wondered what she would think if he told her that the suit he had on was the only one he owned in the world.

The boys accompanied her back to the edge of the marshy spot where she recovered the flowers she had dropped, and then the three started for the shore.

They did not notice that Sam Smith and a hard-looking man was standing at the door of the shanty watching them.

Tom mounted to his seat on the wagon and drove slowly off while Joe and the girl followed after.

"You are a stranger in Seaport, aren't you?" asked Suzette.

"Yes. I only reached here this morning," answered Joe.

"Dear me! Are you working for Tom Baker's employer?"

"No. But I am stopping at Baker's house."

"Are you indeed? Are you a relative of the Bakers?"

"No. I've only known Tom Baker about an hour."

"Is it possible!" she exclaimed in some surprise. "Do you expect to stay in the village?"

"If I get work I will, otherwise I shall go on to Rockland."

"Then I hope you'll get work so I'll have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"I hope so, too, so I'll have the pleasure of meeting you again."

"Oh, dear, I'm not of very great importance," laughed Suzette, stealing a look at him.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I don't think the earth would stop revolving if anything happened to me."

"It certainly would not stop on my account," chuckled Joe.

By the time they reached the foot of Main street, where the wagon had been standing a few minutes, Joe and Suzette had come upon a very friend footing.

She invited him to call and see her, and Joe promised he would, though he had no intention of doing so unless

he could first buy himself a new suit of clothes, and divers other things that he stood in great need of.

As his financial prospects were very doubtful, he thought it would be some time before he called on the charming Suzette.

He and Tom bade her goodby in front of the ship chandlery store, and then he got on the seat and Tom drove on.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WHAT JOE UNCOVERS ON THE BEACH.

When they reached the place where Tom's boss was putting up a frame building, Joe got a quarter from the builder to pay Joe for his services.

Then he asked his employer if he could give Joe anything to do.

He shook his head, but said that his friend Captain Gosport, who lived in one of the best houses in the village, wanted a boy to work around his place, attend to the chores, keep the lawn in shape, look after the plants, and so forth.

Tom called Joe over and asked him if he would like that job.

"I'm willing to go to work at anything," replied Joe. "I'm playing a lone hand, and have got to take whatever is offered to me, as long as it's honest labor."

"Very well," said the builder, whose name was Jones. "I'll take you over to the Captain's house. If he hasn't already got a boy he'll give you a trial on my recommendation."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Joe.

In a few minutes the builder was ready to go and Joe went off with him, after telling Tom he would see him at his home that evening.

They found Captain Gosport seated on his porch, the village newspaper, which was published that day, in his hands.

"Have you got a boy, captain?" asked Jones.

"Not yet," replied the middle-aged skipper, who, besides his own schooner, owned three sloops that were continuously employed in carrying shingles to Boston.

"Well, here is a boy I can recommend to you. Give him a trial. I think you'll find him a good worker."

The captain rather liked the appearance of Joe, notwithstanding that he was looking his worst at that moment.

He questioned him as to his capabilities, and then told him what would be expected of him.

"I'll do the best I can to satisfy you, sir," said Joe.

"Very well, my lad, I can't expect any more than that. I'll give you \$10 a month with board and a room over the stable and carriage-house."

"That was satisfactory to Joe, and he was told to report in the morning at eight o'clock and bring his traps with him.

He went back to the unfinished building with Mr. Jones and told Tom that he had got the job.

"Good for you," said his new friend. "Now you're all right."



"Yes. I'm going to get \$10 a month and my keep with a room to sleep in over the carriage-house."

"Oh!" said Tom. "Then you won't be able to stop at our house?"

"Not after to-night."

"I'm sorry for that. I've taken a liking to you, and figured that it would be a fine thing for us to be together."

"I guess we'll be able to see each other as often as we want to. The captain said I would have my evenings off and most of Sunday. I can come to your house and call on you, and you can come over to my place and visit me," said Joe.

"Sure we can do that. We'll go off somewhere and have a good time next Sunday if you say so," said Tom.

"Well, I won't bother you any more now. I'll take a walk around and see you this evening at your house."

"We have supper about six. Be sure and get there around that hour. No need of your spending that quarter you made at a restaurant when you can eat with us just as well as not," said Tom.

"All right," said Joe. "I'll accept your invitation and you may look for me to be on hand."

Then Joe walked off and put in the next hour strolling around the village.

There wasn't much to interest him particularly about the place.

He had seen a dozen of villages just like it.

Having still a couple of hours at his disposal he decided to go out to the Point and see if he could discover any clue to the hidden kegs of smuggled brandy.

It would be a great thing for him if he found them, for he would surely get enough out of the discovery to buy all the clothes and other things he needed, and leave a surplus to spend in having a good time.

Heretofore lack of money had not greatly bothered him.

Nobody in Rockville paid any attention to his shabby clothes, for he had made few acquaintances, and only those who worked in the canning establishment with him, and many of them were nearly as bad off as he was himself.

His feeling on the subject had undergone a great change since he made the acquaintance of Suzette Castle.

He wanted to follow up a friendship that the girl seemed to encourage, but he felt he could not do that while his apparel was in such bad shape.

He certainly couldn't call on her until he looked presentable, and she doubtless expected him to look a bit spruced up after his hours of labor.

As matters stood with him he saw no chance to get a new suit for a month, for he didn't feel that, stranger as he was in the place, he could ask Captain Gosport to advance him any money worth speaking of on account.

Such was the tenor of his thoughts as he walked over to the Point across the meadows that stretched off beyond the outskirts of the village.

Finally he caught sight of a marshy tract and the shack beyond where he had rescued Suzette from the unwelcome attentions of Sam Smith.

There was nobody in sight and he made straight for the scrub-bushes beyond which lay the mouth of the inlet, with the ocean in the near distance.

Parting the bushes he started through and tripped over

some object that caught his foot and landed him on his face.

Picking himself up he looked to see what he had fallen over.

It proved to be a spade with a long handle.

He picked it up.

"If I knew where to dig this would come in mighty handy," he thought. "Well, the only thing I can do is to look around carefully and see if there isn't some mark the Smiths left to indicate where the kegs are buried."

Dragging the spade along the sand he kept on toward the Point.

The tide was pretty low by this time, but an hour had to pass before it would reach its lowest point that afternoon.

As he tramped along he noticed the ribs of a wrecked vessel sticking out of the water.

He could easily see that they had been there a long time, for the exposed portions were white and decayed.

He walked down to the water's edge and looked at them, wondering what kind of vessel had gone ashore there.

The sandy space between two of the ribs seemed to show that the craft had been a large one.

Joe carefully stuck the point of the spade into the sand where he stood to lean on it, when he felt it strike an obstruction.

Curiosity induced him to dig into the sand to see what was there.

After turning up a number of shovelfuls he saw a dark object.

Getting down on his hands and knees he scraped the sand away from it and to his astonishment exposed the butt of an old-fashioned pistol.

He soon had it in his hand.

It had a long rusty barrel, of very large smooth bore, which was attached to a peculiar shaped, wooden stock.

He tried to pull back the trigger but that was out of the question.

It was certainly a kind of weapon that had not been in use for more than fifty years.

The sight of it recalled Joe's thoughts to the British cruiser which had been wrecked in that vicinity all of eighty years since.

He at once began to wonder if the ribs of the wreck before him were those of the warship in question.

It did not seem to him that a wreck could remain exposed as long as that.

Besides, from what he had heard old man Smith tell the peddler about the cruiser, the storms of a few years had swept the beach clear of all traces of her.

At any rate when the treasure hunters came to look for the chest of sovereigns some years later they had been unable to locate the exact place where the wreck took place.

"I guess those whitened ribs belong to some later day craft," thought Joe. "This pistol doubtless was once on board the cruiser, and was thrown up here by the sea and hidden by the sand before anyone coming this way noticed it. It is quite a curiosity and I mean to keep it."

It was too cumbersome to go into his pocket so he laid it on the sand beside him while he sat with his knees hunched up looking over the water.



His thought, however, clung to the lost cruiser, and he dreamily figured what a fine thing it would be for him if he was lucky enough to get a line on that chest of English gold.

And while he thought he began to drive the point of his spade into the sand in an aimless way, just as if he was spearing some large fish.

Suddenly the iron point of the implement met with another obstruction.

Eager to find out what else was in the sand he got up and began digging once more.

At every point for the space of a couple of feet his spade hit some concealed object.

"Gee!" he exclaimed in some excitement. "Maybe that is one of those brandy kegs. Lord! I hope it is. I'd be in great luck."

He started to dig with great energy, and for some minutes the sand flew in an almost continuous shower.

He dug around the sides of the object, which appeared to be about two feet by one in size, with a flat surface altogether different in shape from a keg.

He paused long enough to force one hand down into the sand when his fingers encountered a very hard object that seemed made of metal.

"It's part of the wreck," he thought, much disappointed. "Maybe a section of her stern. Well, I'm going to see, anyhow."

He resumed his digging and at the end of fifteen minutes he had made an opening sufficiently wide and deep enough to enable him to clear the sand away from the top of the object.

He made out that the thing was an iron box.

That incited him to renewed efforts and he presently had the whole top of the box exposed.

It was thick with rust, and had eight thick knobs sticking above the surface.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Joe. "I'll bet this is the box of sovereigns. It's an old-fashioned looking chest. How in thunder am I going to move it?"

He scraped a part of the rust away.

It came off in great flakes.

Then he saw that the top of the box was reinforced by diamond-shaped pieces of iron, and the knobs were simply the huge heads of rivets that held those pieces tight to the flat top, thus greatly strengthening the chest.

The reader may well believe that Joe was a mighty excited boy now.

Already he saw himself the possessor of the gold that had baffled the efforts of the many treasure hunters who had eagerly sought for it.

Why they had failed to find an object so near the surface of the beach, and in a spot covered less than half the time by the tide, he did not bother about.

What worried him was how he was going to get the box, single-handed, out of the hole, and afterwards to Tom's house in the village.

He dug the sand away from its sides with feverish energy, and had two-thirds of it exposed when an interruption occurred.

It was the bark of a dog.

Joe stopped and looked in the direction of the sound.

A savage-looking bulldog thrust his head through the scrub-bushes and glared at him.

He barked again, several times, as he stood with his fore feet braced forward in the sand, and his thick head thrown up, while the rest of his body was screened behind the bushes.

An answering bark came from a short distance, and soon a second dog of the same breed dashed out on the beach, but stopped on seeing Joe.

He growled menacingly, and the other growled in sympathy, but neither offered to attack the boy.

Thus matters remained for a few minutes, during which Joe did not resume his work, but stood watching the wicked-looking animals.

Then he heard men's voices and presently two trampish rascals made their appearance at the back of the bushes.

They saw Joe and observed that he was digging in the beach.

Whether or not they saw the dark object in the hole he had made it is certain that they resented his presence on the spot.

"Here, get away from this place," said one of them, waving a stout stick he had in his hand.

Under the circumstances Joe didn't care to budge.

He was satisfied he had found the box of gold and he was prepared to defend his prize against all comers.

"What will I get away for?" the boy asked.

"Because we don't want you around," replied the man.

"Do you own this beach?" asked Joe, sarcastically.

"None of your business whether I do or not. Git or we'll set the dogs on you."

"You'd better not if you know when you're well off," replied the boy pluckily.

"Go for him, Tige! Sic him, Major!" cried the man with the stick.

The dogs dashed forward, and Tige made a spring at Joe.

The boy swung his spade in the air and brought it down on the animal's head.

The brute, with a snarling howl, rolled over and lay still.

Then Joe swung the spade on a line and hit the other dog's jaws.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BOX.

A howl of rage came from the men and they rushed forward.

"Get him, Major!" roared the man with the stick. "We'll fix you for layin' out that dog. If you've killed him we'll kill you," added the fellow, savagely.

The wounded animal seemed loath to rush in and chance a second swing of the spade.

He snarled and yelped with pain and rage.

Joe threw half a spade full of sand into his face.

Blinded for the time being, he whirled around and dashed for the bushes.

The two rascals, wild with anger, rushed at Joe.

The boy hesitated to treat them as he had handled the



dogs, lest he kill one of them with the edge of the spade, and his indecision worked his downfall.

While Joe jabbed out at one of the men the fellow with the stick dashed in and felled him with a blow from his cudgel.

The boy fell unconscious on the sand.

"Blame his hide, I hope I've finished him," said the ruffian. "Go and look at Tige and see if he's dead."

At that moment the dog showed signs of life, but he looked pretty groggy as he scrambled on his legs.

"He's all right," said the other chap.

"We ought to toss—hello! What's this? A box in the sand! So that is what the boy was digging out," said the man with the stick.

The two ruffians got down on their knees and examined the chest.

They tried to move it but found they could not.

"I wonder what's in it?" said the last speaker, who answered to the name of Grimes, as he hit the box with his stick.

It gave out a dull, heavy sound, just as if it was a solid mass of iron.

"I should say it was full of something hefty," replied his companion, whose name was Gridley.

"I wonder how the boy came to find it?" said Grimes.

"He must have known it was here for he brought a spade with him."

"I reckon there's somethin' valuable in it."

"I wouldn't be surprised if there was."

"We must get it out and take it over to our shack."

"That's goin' to be somethin' of a job."

"If the boy tackled it all by himself I guess we kin get away with it."

"Why he couldn't have got it out of the sand."

"Whether he could or not, he was tryin' to."

"Shove the kid one side and I'll see what I can do with the spade."

Gridley picked up the implement and began to dig around the box.

Tige, now fully recovered, walked over to the unconscious Joe and began smelling his clothes.

Then he trotted over to the spot where some of Major's blood flecked the sand.

He uttered a yelp and darting toward the bushes disappeared.

Both of the rascals were very much interested in the box, and their interest grew as Gridley exposed the rest of it.

There was a handle at each end, and after a strenuous effort they succeeded in dragging it out of the hole, something that Joe, unaided, could never have accomplished.

"It's blamed heavy," said Grimes.

"That's what it is. We'll have a nice job haulin' it to the shack, and another job openin' it, for it's as solid as a rock," replied Gridley.

"We'll open it, all right, don't you worry," said Grimes. "Come on, get held and we'll run it up to the bushes."

"We'll do a lot of runnin' with it," said Gridley, scowling at the box.

"Don't go to sleep. Somebody is liable to come along, and we don't want anybody to see us with the box or that boy lyin' there with a broken head while we're around."

"What are we goin' to do with him?"

"Nothin'. Let him lie there till he gets his senses back."

"He mightn't get 'em back before the tide came up and drowned him."

"The tide is goin' out, you fool. Anyway he's nothin' to us. If he's drowned that's his funeral."

"And it might be our funeral, too. We'll take him up near the bushes," said Gridley.

Grimes yielded to the argument of his companion and Joe was removed some distance above high-tide mark.

The two rascals then got hold of the box, and half carrying and half dragging it up the beach, pushed it through the bushes, and hauled it over the ground to their shanty.

As soon as they got it inside they sat down to rest, for they felt tired after so much exertion.

They lighted their pipes and took a smoke.

"That box must have come ashore on some vessel that broke upon the beach," said Gridley.

Grimes agreed with his associate, for there was no better way of accounting for the box being buried in the sand.

"Maybe there's a lot of silverware, or somethin' of that sort, in the box," said Gridley. "That would make it heavy."

"The box is heavy enough without anythin' in it," said Grimes.

"Yes, it's pretty solid-lookin'. I ain't never seen a box like that before. It's a mighty curious one, and it looks as if it had been in the sand for more years than you and me have lived."

Grimes examined the keyhole and saw that it was not only covered with rust, but filled with sand that had caked in it.

"I wonder if Smith has a sledge-hammer?" he said.

"Never mind Smith. We don't want to let him in on this. One of us kin go to the blacksmith and get tools there to open it with," said Gridley.

"Which of us will go?"

"We'll cut the cards and see. If you draw the lowest card, countin' the ace as one, you'll go, otherwise it'll be up to me."

That being settled between them each turned a card from the dirty pack on the table.

Gridley lost, and as it was after five o'clock he started for the blacksmith's shop, half a mile away, at once.

The two dogs, which he found outside, accompanied him.

Tige was all right, with the exception of a lump on his head, but Major had a nasty-looking cut from his mouth to his ear."

In the meanwhile Joe came to his senses and sat up.

He was alone on the beach.

He remembered all that had happened.

The men and the dogs had disappeared, and he feared that the iron box had gone, too.

He got up and walked to the hole.

The box was no longer in it, and the tracks on the beach showed how, and in what direction, it had vanished.

"I don't believe they've carried it very far," he said to himself. "I'm going to follow and see what they are doing with it. Unless they've got the right kind of tools I doubt if they will be able to open it, for it looked pretty solid."

It was an easy matter to track the box and the heavy



footprints of the two men into and through the bushes, and then along the ground toward the shanty.

Joe was satisfied they had taken it to the shack.

In fact, the trail was too clear to admit of any doubt.

The boy picked up the cudgel that Grimes had abandoned along the route, and thus armed he was prepared to make a good fight when matters came to an issue.

He approached the building with caution, for he particularly feared another encounter with the dogs.

The dogs failed to appear, however, and creeping up to the open door he looked inside.

The box stood in the middle of the floor, and in front of it, on his knees, was Grimes, picking the sand out of the lock.

Joe saw no signs of his companion.

The boy immediately concluded that he was away after implements with which to break the box open.

If anything was to be done looking to his regaining possession of the box now was the time to do it.

It would be easy to dash into the room and lay the man out with a blow from the stick.

It would be only treating the fellow to a dose of the same medicine he himself had handed out, for Joe recognized him as the ruffian who had knocked him down and out.

As there was no time to lose, the boy acted on the spur of the moment, and before Grimes knew what was going to happen he was lying stunned on the floor.

Dropping the club, Joe seized the box by one handle, and with a prodigious effort dragged it outside.

To carry it any distance was clearly beyond his strength.

But he did his best to get it as far from the shack as he could.

Unfortunately in its slow progress over the ground it left a clear track, and Joe was much discomfited by that fact.

After getting it behind a clump of bushes he left it and tried to blot out the track.

He was only partially successful in this, and then it occurred to him to try and make a false trail in the opposite direction.

He looked around for some object that would do this.

He found an iron kettle in the room, and filling it with stones dragged it over to the lines of bushes, trampled them down and then dragged it over to a large rock.

That was the best he could do in that line, and then dumping out the stones he returned the kettle to the shack where Grimes still lay dead to the world.

On a shelf Joe spied a loaf of bread and a plate of sliced ham.

His exertions had made him very hungry and he viewed the food with a longing eye.

Going to the door, he looked around.

There was no sign yet of the man's companion or the dogs.

"I'll take the chances," muttered the boy.

He found a knife, cut four slices of the bread, made two sandwiches with the ham, and devoured one of them before making another move.

There was a jug of water near by and he took a long drink.

Then he picked up the cudgel and took another look out.

The coast was still clear.

He made a third sandwich and stuffed it in his pocket against an emergency and left the shanty.

He returned to the place where he had left the box, and looking at it wondered where he could hide it from the men.

He decided that he could not do better than to shove it into the clump of bushes, though it was not a very secure hiding place.

He made some further effort to hide the tracks from the house, and was then figuring on making a dash for the village for the purpose of telling Tom Baker about his prize, and arranging with him some plan looking to the getting of the box to his house right away, when he heard the yelping of the dogs close by.

"Those brutes will spot me. What shall I do?" he asked himself.

He remembered there was a ladder in the shack which led to a loft above where he judged the two rascals slept.

He concluded that the best thing he could do was to hide up there until he could get away in safety.

Acting on this plan he dashed into the shanty, ran up the ladder, and stretched himself out at full length on the floor.

He hadn't more than accomplished this move when the dogs came dashing up outside, and then ran sniffing around the building.

Gridley followed them with a small sledge-hammer over his shoulder, and a cold-chisel in his pocket.

He stepped into the shack, but stopped in some consternation when he saw his associate stretched out senseless on the floor and the box gone.

Then he dropped the sledge-hammer and rushed over to Grimes.

"What in thunder has happened to Grimes, and where is the box?" Joe heard him mutter. "Why, the man is knocked out. Who could have done this? There must have been more than one, for Grimes is a tough nut to handle. And they must have carried the box off."

He uttered a string of imprecations, and looked around as if for a clue to the mystery.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON THE WRONG SCENT.

At that moment Grimes sat up and stared around.

"So you've come to," said Gridley. "What happened while I was away? Who was it that attacked you and carried off the box?"

"What's that? Carried off the box! Who carried off the box?" asked Grimes, staring at his companion.

"That's what I'm askin' you?"

"I don't know nothin' about it."

"You don't! Well, you see it's gone, don't you?"

Grimes looked at the spot where the box had stood and uttered an imprecation.

He scrambled on his feet.



"It's funny if you don't know anythin' about the matter. You saw the chaps who laid you out, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't see anybody."

"Oh, come now, tell that to the marines. You must have seen 'em."

"I tell you I didn't. All I know is that somethin' hit me on the head. That's all I remembered till now."

"I don't see how anybody could steal a march on you. What were you doin' at the time?"

"What was I doin'?"

Grimes tried to think while he rubbed the big lump on his head.

Then he remembered he had been picking the sand out of the lock of the box, and he told his companion.

"Then you had your back to the door?"

"I did," admitted Grimes.

"That accounts for it. The chaps rushed in on you and hit you on the head. I wonder if it could have been Smith and his son? Nobody else comes around here."

"Why should Smith do such a thing? Ain't we all pards?"

"Yes, we're in together, but for all that I wouldn't trust Smith any further than I could see him. He'd do anythin' for the mighty dollar, that's why he's in on this smugglin' game. They say he's as well fixed as anybody in the village, and yet he's got the poorest mouth of anybody I ever ran across. Look at him and his family livin' over the shop, like tenement people in a city, when they might have a fine house and grounds like Captain Gosport, who ain't got half Smith's money, I'll bet, and put on some style in their old age. What's the use of him hoardin' up his money? He can't take it along with him when he goes to the cemetery."

"I don't believe it was Smith and his son who attacked me. It must have been somebody else," said Grimes.

"Whoever it was has taken the box. We must follow them and get it back. They couldn't take it away without leavin' tracks behind. Come out and we'll take a look."

They went outside and Gridley immediately noticed the track made by the pot, which led over into the bushes.

"They dragged it off this way," he said, deceived by the heavy imprint of the pot. "Come on."

The two men, calling the dogs, followed the bogus trail.

It led them only a short distance, to the big stone on the beach.

There it ceased.

Gridley saw the pile of stones.

"Look at these stones. There weren't here early this afternoon when we stood here smokin'," he said. "As there ain't no signs showin' that the box was carried any further I'll bet the fellows who brought it from the shanty buried it here and put those stones to mark the spot."

"I guess you're right, for I don't see the print of wagon wheels, and they couldn't have carried it to the village without a wagon," said Grimes.

"They must have used the spade the boy had. We were fools to leave it around."

Grimes looked where they had left Joe in the shadow of the bushes and saw that he was not there now.

That fact put a new line of thought into his head.

"That boy has disappeared," he said.

"Came to his senses and took a sneak," said Gridley.

"Maybe it was him who sneaked into the shanty, laid me out from behind, and then got away with the box?"

"Get out! He might have knocked you out, but how could he have dragged that heavy box here all by himself? It was as much as both of us could do to get it to the shanty."

Grimes couldn't answer the question, and did not attempt to.

"I'spose the box is buried here and we'll have to dig it up and lug it back to the house," he said, not relishing the labor involved.

"I guess it's here all right. I'll go to the shanty for the shovel."

"Why there's the spade the boy used, lying beside the hole the box came out of," said Grimes, pointing at it.

Gridley went over and got it.

They were about to begin operations when they saw two persons approaching from the direction of the village.

"Hold on," said Grimes. "Here comes Smith and his son."

Gridley threw the spade behind the rock and the pair advanced to meet the newcomers.

"Hello, Smith, what's new?" asked Grimes.

"I've arranged the sale of six kegs of liquor," said the ship chandler.

"Six, eh? That's quite a bunch. Who's goin' to take 'em? A dealer?"

"A peddler, who's goin' to retail the stuff around the country."

"You ain't goin' to bring him out here after 'em, are you?"

"Yes, but not to the shanty. I told him that I discovered them hidden in the sand near the P'int, and left 'em there as I didn't consider it safe to carry 'em to my store."

"Told him you discovered 'em, eh?" grinned Grimes.

"Yes. Told him they must have been some kegs that were landed a few years ago when smugglin' was goin' on at different p'int along the coast, buried in the sand and lay there untouched ever since," said Smith.

"Good idea, and you want us to roll six kegs from the cellar of the shanty and leave 'em in the bushes where you kin find 'em when you bring the peddler?"

"The kegs must not be left in the bushes. They've got to be buried in the beach so that the peddler and me can dig 'em up. That will avoid all suspicion."

"First rate scheme, but they must be buried below high-water mark so that the next tide will wipe away all traces of our work," said Grimes.

Smith nodded.

"You have to get right to work for the tide is beginnin' to come in. Make the hole well up so that the place will be uncovered just before sunrise, when I intend to bring the peddler out here with his wagon," said Smith.

"It'll be high tide at one. We'll bury 'em so that the spot will be uncovered about four. We'll dig it on a line with that rock yonder in the direction of the water," said Grimes.

"All right. Get your shovels now and start in diggin'."



You want to have the hole ready before you start to move the kegs."

"There's a spade behind the rock that we found on the beach," said Grimes.

"What brought it on the beach?" asked Smith.

"Say, dad," said Sam, "somebody has been makin' a hole in the shore."

"Oh, a boy was diggin' there, and Gridley and me chased him away," said Grimes.

"A boy! What boy?"

"I don't know who he is. He seemed to be lookin' for somethin'. He brought the spade and left it behind him."

"I'll bet it was that chap I told you about, dad. The feller I caught listenin' to what marm and me was sayin' at the back of the shop," said Sam.

"What's that?" said Grimes. "You caught a feller listenin' at the back of the shop? I hope you wasn't talkin' about the licker."

"Yes, that's just what we were talkin' about, though we didn't say much. We might have said more if I hadn't noticed that chap's face at the winder," said Sam.

Grimes ripped out an imprecation and didn't look pleasantly at the boy.

"I've told Sam time and ag'in that his gabby mouth will ruin everythin' yet," said the ship chandler.

"Do you want to go to jail, you young fool?" roared Grimes.

"No, I don't," growled Sam.

"Then keep that trap of yours shut on the subject of licker. If we're caught you'll be sent to prison with us, for you're mixed up in this business as much as we are," said Grimes.

"There ain't nobody closer than me," protested Sam. "Who'd have supposed that a strange boy would have come nosin' around the back of the store? He hadn't any business there."

"I'd like to know what he heard," said Grimes.

"He didn't hear anythin' that'll hurt us."

"I hope not. Go and get a shovel, Gridley, and we'll get busy. I'll use the spade behind the rock. It will be dark by the time we finish the job."

As Gridley moved off towards the shanty Sam walked over to the hole that Joe dug and picked up the old rusty pistol.

He brought it over and showed it to his father and Grimes.

Suddenly the two dogs who had been running about set up a loud barking and dashed into the bushes near the spot where the foregoing conversation had taken place.

Then came the sound of a blow and one of the dogs gave a howl of pain.

Another blow and another howl.

Grimes, followed by the ship chandler and his son, rushed to the spot to see what was going on, and beheld Joe Sargent, who had left the loft of the shanty as soon as the coast was clear, and had since been concealed in the bushes watching the movements of Grimes and Gridley, and listening to all that was said before and after the coming of the Smiths, doing his best to stand the two dogs off with his cudgel.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A PRISONER.

"That's the boy we caught diggin' the hole on the beach," said Grimes.

"It's the boy who overheard what marm and I was sayin' at the back of the shop," said Sam.

"It is, eh?" roared Grimes. "Then we'll attend to him. Come on and help me nab him."

The three precipitated themselves on Joe and bore him to the ground.

"Run to the shanty, Sam, and get some rope so we can tie him," said Grimes, as he knelt on Joe's chest and held him down, while Jacob Smith caught the prisoner's arms and held them.

Sam darted off to get the rope.

"So, you're still hangin' around this place," cried Grimes, with a furious look at Joe. "What's your object? Why didn't you go home after we let you go?"

The boy had nothing to say.

"Won't answer, eh, you young squab? It's my opinion you're a spy. Tryin' to find out somethin' that it ain't your business to know. I reckon it was you who laid me out in the shanty awhile ago."

"What's that?" asked Smith. "Was he in the shanty?"

"I didn't see him there, but somebody came behind me while I was doin' somethin' in the room and hit me a clip on the head that knocked me unconscious."

"The deuce you say!" cried Smith. "Where were Gridley and the dogs at the time? I thought you had things fixed so that nobody could come near the house without you knew it."

"Oh, Gridley and the dogs happened to be away at that moment," said Grimes, who did not care to make any explanation about the box to Smith.

"If he went away he shouldn't have taken the dogs," said Smith. "They were brought here solely to watch around the house. You know that as well as I do, for it was your own scheme."

"I know," growled Grimes. "Gridley had no business to take 'em with him."

"What's the matter with Major's mouth? He's got a bad cut almost to his ear."

"This chap hit him with the spade when I set the dogs on him to chase him off at the time Gridley and me caught him diggin' that hole on the shore."

"Why were you diggin' in the beach, young man?" Smith asked Joe. "What brought you down here anyway?"

"I was digging in the beach because I felt like it, and I came down here because the shore is public property, and anybody has a right to go anywhere on it," answered the boy, doggedly.

"My son says you were hangin' around the back of my store and listenin' to what he and his mother were sayin'. Why were you spyin' around my place?" said the ship chandler.

"I'm a stranger in this neighborhood and I just happened to pass behind your store."

"Then you wasn't listenin' on purpose, eh?"



Before Joe could make an evasive reply, Sam appeared with the rope and Gridley was with him.

"Hello, got that boy again?" asked the man.

"Yes. And I reckon we'll keep him awhile this time till we learn somethin' more about him. It's my opinion he's learned too much for our good, and must be dealt with accordin'ly," replied Grimes. "Help me tie him up."

Joe made no resistance, for he saw it would avail him nothing.

Four to one, not mentioning two savage dogs, are pretty big odds for the most resolute lad to contend with.

"Where are you goin' to stow him?" asked Smith, senior.

That was a problem which had not occurred to Grimes and he scratched his ear.

"We can't take him into the shanty for various reasons," he said. "We'll have to tie him to that tree at the back of the house."

Accordingly Joe was marched to the tree and secured to it.

"You'll have to work fast at that hole," said Jacob Smith as they left him, "for it's gettin' dark now. Sam will help you."

Taking the other shovel the whole bunch repaired to the shore and got busy there.

As soon as the hole was considered deep enough they returned to the shanty.

Grimes and Gridley went into the marsh and fetched out six kegs of cognac which had never paid duty, and they were rolled out on the beach, laid side by side in the trench and covered up.

The surface was then smoothed down and the completion of the job left to the incoming tide.

The four then returned to the shanty where Grimes lit a lamp, for it was almost dark by this time, though the clear, star-lit firmament enabled one to see around the landscape to some extent.

Jacob Smith looked at his cheap watch, for he was too close with money to buy a good one, and found that it was eight o'clock.

"Come, Sam, it is time for us to get back home," he said.

"Have a drink before you go," said Grimes.

Smith did not object, so the three men, with Sam looking on, drank success to the sale of the six kegs.

"Sam has the idea in his head that the peddler, who's been around the village for nearly a week sellin' notions, is a Government inspector in disguise," said the old man, "but that's all nonsense."

"What gave you the idea, Sam?" asked Grimes, regarding the youth closely.

"'Cause he was sellin' his goods so cheap, for one thing. I couldn't see where he was makin' any money," replied Sam.

"He was sellin' 'em cheap because he told me he bought 'em for next to nothin' at an auction sale in Boston," explained Smith, senior.

"And because he's been hangin' around the village so long," went on Sam.

"There ain't nothin' in that," said his father.

"And also because he's taken a shine to dad, and comes 'round every day to chin with him," concluded the youth.

"Why shouldn't he come around if he felt like it?" said the ship chandler.

"You ought to have told me about him before," said Grimes. "He might be a revenue man in disguise for all we know, and if he is, he's dangerous."

"Is he the man you've arranged to sell the six kegs to?" asked Gridley.

"Yes," said Smith.

"I think you're takin' chances, don't you, Grimes?"

"I ain't takin' no chances at all. I told him I accidentally discovered them kegs in the sand, and that I left 'em there because I guessed they belonged to the people who formerly smuggled licker into this State, and who are now servin' their time in prison. I argued that they belonged to me by right of findin', and were too small a matter to tell the Government about. In any case I reckoned that I was entitled to make what I could out of 'em, and he agreed with me," said Smith.

"Well, they ain't no evidence ag'in anybody where they are now," said Grimes. "Nobody kin prove that you didn't find 'em in the sand, so even if the peddler is a revenue officer in disguise he couldn't use them ag'in you. But the fact might arouse his suspicions that there was somethin' more in it than you told him, and he might set a watch in this neighborhood, and that would block our little business."

"In that case it would be likely that the shanty would be searched," said Gridley, "and our reasons for livin' here inquired into."

"What do you care for that?" said Smith. "The kegs we haven't sold yet are safe enough in the marsh, and the revenue people wouldn't find nothin' suspicious in the house. As for your reasons for livin' here that's your own business and not the Government's."

The men talked freely, quite overlooking the fact that the window at the back was open and that every word they said reached the ears of their prisoner.

If Joe hadn't been fully satisfied before that he had discovered the headquarters of the liquor smugglers he no longer had any doubt about it.

Although a prisoner in their hands, he felt sanguine of making his escape.

And then he meant to communicate with the inspector of the district and earn the advertised reward.

That of itself would be a big lift for him without figuring on the box which he confidently believed contained the gold of the British cruiser.

Under such circumstances he was not worrying much about the job he was expected to connect with in the morning at Captain Gosport's house.

He intended to stick to his present line of action until he had won the reward and found out what was in the iron box.

Jacob Smith, having said all he wanted to, walked home with his son, and the two men in the hut set about preparing a belated supper.

It was then they discovered that somebody had made free with the loaf of bread and plate of cooked ham, and they judged that their prisoner was the guilty one.

However, they had plenty to eat in the house, so after cussing the boy for helping himself to their property, they



proceeded to fry some bacon and eggs, and cook a pot of coffee.

As soon as the meal was ready they placed it on the table, drew up their chairs and began to eat, after which they got out their pipes and took a smoke, talking together on one subject or another, while the dogs lay outside of the door and kept watch against the approach of intruders.

## CHAPTER X.

### JOE MAKES HIS ESCAPE, BUT——.

Joe guessed the time pretty accurately, and he wondered how long Tom and his mother had waited for him to come to supper, and what Tom thought of his failure to be on hand as he had promised.

The prospects of sleeping that night in the room he had paid for did not look very promising at that moment.

If he slept at all it would probably be in his standing position against the tree unless he could manage to free himself.

He had a view of the interior of the shanty, and could see the heads of the two men as they sat smoking and talking together.

As for the dogs, he had no idea where they were, but guessed they were around the door resting themselves.

The box, which he had hidden in the patch of bushes, he calculated was safe for the night at least, and that was a source of satisfaction to him.

Joe thought about the peddler more than once, and he wondered whether Sam Smith's suspicions were well founded.

He also thought about the kegs of smuggled brandy and speculated as to what part of the marsh they were concealed in.

Doubtless the revenue people would find them without much trouble if told where to look for them.

With not a soul to help him in his present emergency Joe felt that he was indeed playing a lone hand against a combination that for the present appeared to hold all the trumps.

"Well, that's nothing new for me," he thought. "I've been going it alone ever since I had to hustle on my own account, and I think it's about time that luck gave me a lift. If I could only get away from these chaps I'd be all right."

After several unsuccessful efforts Joe succeeded in getting his right arm free.

That loosened the rope so much that he easily shook his left loose.

The only obstacle to freedom that remained was the rope which held him to the tree.

By degrees he worked this down below his hips and then the rest was easy.

"Now for the village," he said to himself.

Unfortunately at that moment he saw the shadowy form of one of the dogs coming toward him, and he concluded that it would be the part of wisdom to remain where he was till the dog went away.

The animal came up and smelled of his trousers.

Apparently the animal, who was Major, recognized him as the person who had cut his face with the spade, for he growled ominously as if he would like to take revenge for his injuries.

The dog's growl attracted the attention of Grimes, who got up, lighted a lantern and came outside to see if anything was wrong.

He saw the dog standing close to Joe and ordered him away, then he flashed the light over the boy.

He saw at once that there was something wrong, though Joe held his hands behind him as if he was still a prisoner.

Grimes, however, was not deceived.

He missed the rope that had held the boy to the tree, and flashing the light on the ground saw it lying there.

"How in thunder did you get free of that rope, you young sculpin?" he cried, seizing Joe by the shoulder.

Then he experienced his second surprise.

The boy swung one arm around and smashed him in the jaw with his fist.

He followed the blow up with a second from the other fist, which sent the rascal reeling backward.

The lantern fell to the ground and the light went out.

Taking advantage of his chance, Joe made a break for the beach.

Grimes yelled for his associate and Gridley came rushing out of the shanty.

"What's the matter?" asked Gridley.

"He's got away," roared Grimes.

"What, the boy?"

"Yes, the boy. He'll make for the village. We must cut him off. Put the dogs on his trail."

Gridley lost no time in doing that, and Joe had hardly got as far as the rock near which the men had buried the six kegs of brandy than he heard the animals dashing through the bushes after him.

He knew that he couldn't escape them on the open beach so he hastily scrambled to the top of the rock and crouched down.

The animals lost the scent and began running here and there in their efforts to recover it.

The men came on the beach further on and called to the dogs.

The animals responded and the bunch rushed off in the direction of the village.

Joe descended from his perch and rushing back through the bushes took the upper path for Seaport.

He had gone perhaps an eighth of a mile when he heard one of the dogs coming toward him.

He stopped and shinned up a convenient tree.

The noise he made attracted the animal's attention, and he stopped at the foot of the tree and began to bark furiously.

"Gee! This is hard luck," muttered Joe. "The brute will bring the men down on me and I shall be captured again just when I thought things were coming out all right."

The dog continued to bark and presently he was joined by the other animal and he added his voice to the concert.

"That settles it. The men will be here presently," said Joe to himself.

He heard them coming up on the run.

"Ha! The dogs have treed him," he heard Grimes say.



They came up and looked into the tree.

Owing to the leaves and the darkness they could not make the boy out, but they were fairly satisfied that he was there.

"Come down, you young swab!" cried Grimes. "We've got you cornered and you can't get away."

Joe didn't intend to come down if he could help himself.

The dogs couldn't climb up, and the men would have to in order to reach him.

"Are you coming down?" shouted Grimes again.

Joe gave no indication that he heard the order, and the men consulted.

The result of the confab was that Gridley, the lighter of the two, started to climb up.

Joe heard him coming and moved further up.

That, however, would not avail him, for Gridley was bound to reach him.

"I hear you," shouted Grimes.

A crash drowned his voice as the branch on which Joe was roosting broke under his weight.

The boy fell on Grimes and bore him to the ground.

The startled dogs drew back as Grimes uttered a howl and a flow of invectives.

Fortunately Joe was not injured, as the man had broken his fall.

Both came to the earth in a heap.

Joe sprang on his feet and darted off in the darkness.

In his hurry and excitement he did not notice that he was retracing his steps until he saw the shanty ahead of him.

He dived inside, slammed the door and bolted it.

He eluded the dogs by a narrow margin, shutting the door squarely in the face of one of them.

When the men came up, as they did in a few minutes, they found themselves shut out by their prisoner.

Joe opened the front window a little way and looked out.

"Well, gents, how are you feeling?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Let us in, d'ye hear," said Grimes.

"Sorry, but I'd rather not," replied Joe.

"Then we'll force the door and make you sweat for the trouble you're givin' us."

"Go on and force it. I'll have a nice little surprise waiting for you."

"You'd better give up."

"I don't agree with you. I intend to stay here and keep you and your friend on the outside."

The men shook the door, but it was too strong for them to make any impression on it.

They hauled off a few yards to consider how they were going to get the better of the boy.

Joe shut the window and went to the back one, which stood partly open.

He wondered if he could get out that way without the men hearing him.

In order to prevent them seeing him if they looked through the front window Joe turned out the lamp which had been burning all the time the rascals had been away.

Joe opened the rear window to its fullest extent and looked out.

The coast was clear and he was about to venture to

steal a march on the men when one of the dogs appeared around the corner.

That spoiled his plan, and he waited for the dog to go away.

Instead of doing so the dog crouched down beside the tree, as if on guard.

Joe retired from the window and sat down on the lowest rung of the ladder to await the next move on the part of the men

## CHAPTER XI.

### BESIEGED.

Presently he saw the face of one of the men, he couldn't tell which, at the rear window.

He was looking for Joe, but as the room was dark he couldn't make out where the boy was.

He withdrew his head.

"I wonder what they think of doing?" Joe asked himself. "If he looks in again I'll give him a shock."

The boy crawled over to the table on which stood the plates and cups used by the men at their meal.

In a few minutes Grimes appeared at the window and thrust in the lantern, which he had relighted.

Joe let fly one of the cups and it hit the man on the forehead.

He uttered a yell, dropped the lantern on the floor and disappeared.

The boy chuckled and seized the second cup.

The lantern had landed in an upright position and did not go out.

Joe decided to take possession of it.

As he crawled over to it he saw a club standing in a corner and he took charge of it with a view to a future emergency.

Extinguishing the lantern he looked out of the window and saw the two men standing near the corner of the shanty.

Grimes was holding a handkerchief to his face.

Joe thought it wasn't fair for one man to bear all the trouble of the siege, so he threw the second cup at Gridley's head.

It took effect on his ear, and he uttered a roar like a stuck pig and began swearing like a trooper.

"You young villain, wait till I get my hands on you," he cried, furiously.

"You're only getting a part of what's coming to you for treating me the way you are doing," returned Joe. "When you saw me on the beach why didn't you leave me alone? I wasn't interfering with either of you."

"We didn't want you around, you sculpin," replied Grimes.

"I had a perfect right to be on the beach. I want to know what you did with that box," said Joe, throwing a bluff.

"I guess you know where it is yourself," snarled Gridley.

"If it's in here I haven't found it yet."

"It isn't in there and you know it," said Grimes, in a wrathful tone.



"You've hidden it, you rascals."

"Oh, shut up, and don't be tryin' to throw dust in our eyes. You've been around here all the time, so you know where it's gone to," said Grimes.

"How do you know I've been around here all the time?"

Grimes said something that sounded like an imprecation, and the men retired out of sight.

Whether they went back to the front, or only a few feet away, Joe couldn't tell.

The dog lay in the same spot, so escape was for the present out of the question.

In a few minutes Joe heard a light scraping sound on the outside of the house.

He wondered what the men were up to.

As it came from the front of the house he flattened his nose against the glass of the front window, but couldn't make out anything.

He was afraid to open the window lest a missile might be thrown at him.

The sounds continued and seemed to be higher up.

He bethought himself of going up to the loft and looking out the window that overlooked the door.

As his head got above the level of the open trap he saw that the window was blocked by the body of one of the rascals who was trying to get into the house that way.

He was already half way through.

"Get out of there!" cried Joe, rushing up as fast as he could and jabbing the fellow in the ribs with his club.

He could easily have broken his head, but did not care to injure him.

"Stop that!" howled Grimes, for it was he.

"Then go back or I'll knock you on the head."

Grimes felt that he was at the wideawake boy's mercy, so he reluctantly backed out and dropped to the ground.

Joe saw that his companion was holding the trunk of a small tree against the outside wall, and it was by this means Grimes had made his way to the window.

"You chaps don't seem to be making much progress," said Joe. "It's a wonder you wouldn't give it up."

They shook their fists at him and said hard things.

Joe watched them and made no further remark.

Gridley threw the tree-trunk on the ground, and the men retired to a home-made bench under a spreading tree and sat down to try and figure out some other scheme for getting the best of the boy.

Finally Gridley got up and walked off toward the shore.

The moments went by and he didn't come back.

"I'd like to know where he's gone, and what new plan they have in view," Joe asked himself.

The sky grew lighter in the east and then the moon rose in her full glory and shed her radiance over the landscape.

The front of the shanty was in the shade as it faced to the west.

Grimes continued to sit and smoke under the tree, and Joe could see his figure now quite distinctly.

One of the dogs lay stretched out in front of the door, while the other was sleeping with one eye open at the back.

Apparently there wasn't the ghost of a chance for Joe to escape from the house.

The rascals had him cornered even if they couldn't enter his place of refuge.

Joe realized that he was hungry again, and as he knew

there was food in plenty down stairs, he left the loft and lighted the lantern.

He cut up the rest of the bread, used up all the ham in making sandwiches, and taking the jug of water with him, returned to the loft to keep his eye on Grimes.

Half an hour elapsed and then Gridley returned with Sam Smith.

They carried a short ladder between them.

That seemed to indicate that another attempt was going to be made by the rascals to enter by way of the loft window.

"I'll bet they're going to push Sam Smith to the front, and let him catch the hard knocks, as they have had quite enough themselves," thought Joe.

Sam and the two men held a consultation and then they proceeded to business.

The ladder was put up under the window and held there by Grimes.

Then Gridley went to the door and began operations on it with a piece of steel that answered the purpose of a jimmy.

Sam Smith got on the ladder, but only went part way up.

Then Joe saw through their scheme.

Gridley intended to get in by forcing the door, and Sam was sent up the ladder to hold the besieged lad in the loft.

As soon as the rascal got the door open he and probably Grimes, too, intended to rush up the ladder.

Doubtless the enemy figured that Joe would leave the window to try and prevent Gridley coming up, then Sam would dash in through the window and take him on the flank, which would enable Gridley to force his way up, and the besieged would once more be a prisoner.

Joe saw that it would be impossible for him to hold out once the two rascals effected their entrance below, and he started to think if there was any way by which he could euchen them.

He could jump through the back window and have it out with the dog.

He had noticed that both animals showed a certain amount of respect for him when he faced them with a weapon in his hands.

He felt that the club would keep either or both dogs at bay, but the moment he started to run they would go for him.

Well, he saw he must take the risk if he hoped to make his escape.

Having screwed up his courage to make the attempt he went softly downstairs.

When he reached the room below he saw that the bolt was giving way under the muscular efforts of Gridley.

Any moment might see its finish.

If he was going to get out by the back window he had no time to lose.

Then another plan flashed across the boy's mind.

That was to stand against the wall where the door would hide him when it was pushed in.

He calculated that both of the men would rush in and start up the ladder.

They would never suspect that he was downstairs, and



he could take advantage of the fact to dash outside and pass the dog before anyone was the wiser.

It struck Joe as being a bang-up idea and he adopted it at once.

A moment later the bolt gave way and the door was dashed in by Gridley, who made a break at once for the ladder.

To Joe's disappointment the other man did not follow.

Gridley, finding his way unopposed, kept on up into the loft.

It was now or never with Joe and he came from behind the door and glanced out.

Sam was near the top of the ladder and Grimes was behind him.

The dog, Major, was over near the seat under the tree.

Joe rushed out and made for the edge of the marsh, believing he could elude the dogs better that way, though his line of retreat took him away from the village.

He would have made good his escape but for Sam Smith's sharp eyes.

Sam happened to look down just as he came out at the door, and, recognizing his figure, gave a yell.

"There he goes out of the door. He wasn't in the loft at all," he shouted.

Grimes caught a fleeting glimpse of Joe and hustled down the ladder as fast as he could go, followed by Sam, shouting at the same time to Gridley, who had thrust his head out of the window.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WRECK IN THE MARSH.

Joe secured a good start before the pursuit got under way, with the dogs in the lead.

He was out of sight along the path which bordered the marsh.

His enemies knew he had a long run of it to skirt the soggy ground and they expected the dogs would overhaul him before he got very far.

They also calculated that the inflowing tide, which entered the marsh on that side, would cut off his escape any way.

Joe, being a stranger in that vicinity, knew nothing about the tide's connection with the swampy ground.

The dogs outstripped the two men and Sam and finally came up with the fugitive.

Joe stepped back into the bushes and banged Tige, who was in the lead, on the head.

The stick landed on the lump Joe had previously handed out to the animal on the beach, and Tige uttered a terrible howl and sprang back.

The boy waited for Major, but that brute, remembering how he had been treated before, stopped and held back.

Joe then backed away, the dogs following in a sullen way, Tige uttering a howl every once in awhile.

Knowing that Sam and the two men were hot on his track, Joe turned and made off again at a run.

The dogs followed fast enough to keep close to him, but they made no effort to overtake him.

Suddenly Joe found himself splashing through water, which deepened each moment, and he stopped to investigate.

The dogs stopped, and eyed him vengefully.

He made a step toward them and swung his club in the moonlight.

They jumped back out of reach of the weapon.

Finding that they were partly cowed he looked about him and found that he had run into a kind of cul-de-sac in the marsh.

To proceed was to go straight into the deepening water of the swamp.

Both sides were lined with tall grass and rushes, extending how far Joe could not guess, and there was no stable footing—nothing but thick, oozy mud.

The only safe way of getting out of his predicament was to retrace his steps, and that would be to run into the arms of his pursuers.

Joe decided to keep on into the marsh as far as he felt it would be safe to go and see if his enemies would follow him through the water.

At any rate he was sure the dogs wouldn't.

The latter fact was soon proved by the animals giving up further pursuit when the water rose to their bellies.

With the water above his knees, Joe stopped and waited for his pursuers to come on.

He wanted to see what they would do before going further.

While he stood there, with the rising tide whirling around his legs, he saw a peculiar-looking object further out in the marsh, where the water was pretty deep.

It looked like the skeleton of some huge animal, glistening in the moonlight.

He could see the great white ribs rising out of the water, lost in the maze of rushes.

While he was looking at it Grimes, Gridley and Sam came as far as the edge of the tide-water, where the dogs awaited them.

It was clear to them that the boy had gone right ahead into the water, for they knew he couldn't do otherwise without penetrating the soggy reeds and grass, and that meant sure death.

The dogs showed how far they had been in, which indicated that the fugitive must be in up to his knees at least.

"He can't get out till the tide goes down hours from now," said Grimes. "We had better keep on and force him back to a point where he'll have to swim, if he knows how, or give in and come out."

"Where can he swim to?" said Sam, who knew the swamp better than his companions. "His only show will be to make for the old wreck, for the other way is blocked by rushes through which he never could make his way, and would drown tryin' to."

"Let's hope that he can't swim and will give up," said Gridley.

"You fellows can go ahead, I won't," said Sam. "If he starts to swim for the wreck you'd better warn him that it's covered at high tide."

"Is it?" asked Grimes.

"It is. There isn't an inch of it above water when the tide is up."

"Supposin' it is, he can stand on it, can't he?"



"There's nothin' to stand on that I know of. He might cling to the end of one of the ribs, but how long could he do that? I tell you he's got to give in and come out or see his finish," said Sam.

"You said a moment ago that his only show would be for the wreck," said Grimes.

"I know I did, but I didn't say how much of a show it was. I wouldn't take the chance of trying to hold on to that wreck through high-tide for all the kegs in the marsh, if they were filled with gold dollars instead of brandy," said Sam.

As Sam loved the dollars about as much as his father, his declaration indicated that to swim out to the wreck was a kind of involuntary suicide.

"Well, come on, Gridley," said Grimes. "Let's go ahead. We can stand a wetting. It won't be the first time we've had one."

"What's the matter with going back a little way, sending the dogs on with Sam, who is no more use to us at present, and waiting for the tide to drive the boy out?"

Grimes thought the idea was not bad and fell in with it.

The party retraced their steps to a point where the tide wouldn't come, then Sam called the dogs to follow, which they did, while Grimes and Gridley awaited developments.

Joe in the meanwhile began to realize that the water was steadily rising about him where he stood, from which fact he woke up to the knowledge that he was caught in the tide as well as in the marsh itself.

That wasn't a cheerful reflection, particularly as he could not guess how high the water would go.

He knew by this time that the pursuit had stopped, but he doubted that it had been given up.

He guessed the men didn't care to follow him into the marsh, and were camped on his trail waiting for him to come out, when they would nab him.

Joe didn't feel like giving them the satisfaction of catching him, for many reasons.

He had made out that what looked like a gigantic skeleton was the ribs of a wrecked vessel driven up into the marsh by the action of a tremendous storm, probably years since, before the marsh was so thick with rushes as it was now.

At that moment a large log came floating within his reach.

When he saw it he decided to make use of it in swimming out to the wreck, where he felt he would be quite safe from his pursuers till morning, when he did not doubt but he would be able to make his escape without much trouble.

As Joe was a very fair swimmer he did not doubt that he could get to the wreck without the log, but he figured that it might come in handy after he got there.

Accordingly he grabbed the log and pushing it before him began making his way to the wreck.

In a short time he guided himself and the log between the submerged ribs, and found that a part of the stern of the craft was still intact and above the present water-line.

On this he took refuge, and lifted the log upon it.

As it was quite a warm night, he removed his clothes and after wringing out the water laid them on the time-scarred planks to dry out.

He did not find it unpleasant to sit around in the garb that nature had provided him with—the air being much warmer than the water.

He chuckled as he thought of his enemies, whom he pictured as waiting somewhere on the edge of the marsh for him to turn up.

"They'll have a long wait, I'm thinking," he said. "They would have to walk out up to their waist in water before they would be able to discover where I have gone, and it's not at all certain they would learn then unless they have uncommonly good eyesight, for with my clothes off I might easily be taken in the moonlight for a part of this old vessel. I wonder how long this wreck has been here? From the looks of it I should say anywhere from twenty to fifty years. In a place like this marsh a wreck will hold together ten times longer than out on the beach—yes, twenty times longer, for it is sheltered from rough handling by wind and tide."

Then Joe's thoughts returned to the box which he believed contained the British cruiser's gold.

He hoped the rascals who were so anxious to get hold of him would not discover its hiding-place.

"I'll come out to-morrow with a couple of men and take possession of it," he thought. "If it contains the gold I'll be a rich young fellow, and can have all the good clothes and good times I want. Instead of working at any old job I'll be able to buy an interest in some good business. Then I'll call on Miss Suzette like a gentleman, and who knows but in time we might get married and live together in a fine house on the fat of the land."

It was quite an interesting air-castle that he built around the supposed box of treasure and Suzette Castle, with whom he was already more than half in love, but then he had nothing else to do out in the middle of the marsh in the silence and moonlight of a summer's night, and persons much older than he would probably have passed the hours in the same kind of mental occupation.

And while he sat there and dreamed dreams that might not come true, the water continued to rise till it began to encroach on the planks of the only refuge he had.

Joe was more than half asleep when the water began tickling his toes, and its somewhat chilly touch aroused him to the seriousness of his situation.

The ribs of the wreck were now wholly submerged, though the tallest of them was barely below the surface.

The remains of the stern deck would have been under water but that it inclined upward at a slight angle.

It was thickly surrounded by rushes, and to that fact was due Sam's ignorance of its existence.

Joe pulled in his toes and looked at the rising of the water with a fascinated gaze, wondering if it would cover the bit of deck entirely.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### WHAT THE IRON BOX CONTAINED.

The water rose another inch and then stopped.

The tide was at its highest point and would remain that way for an hour or longer when it would begin to recede, and it would be long after daylight before it reached its lowest point.

It would not be necessary for Joe to remain on the wreck



any longer than he calculated that the coast would be clear for him to make his escape.

He did not think the men would lie in wait for him all night, but nevertheless he did not intend to make a move till morning came.

He stretched himself out, with his feet within a few inches of the water, and before many minutes had passed he was asleep.

When he opened his eyes it was broad daylight.

The water had receded to a considerable extent and he was able to look down into the muddy interior of the wreck.

The early rays of the sun, shining between the hoary-looking ribs of live oak, sparkled upon a bit of dull brass sticking out of the mud.

"I suppose that is a piece of the vessel's brasswork down there," thought Joe, as he looked at it.

The longer he looked at it the more his curiosity was excited concerning it.

He dumped the log down, and stepping on it, bent down and pushed some of the mud away.

To his surprise it proved to be the end of a brass-bound box.

He uncovered the top wholly, and found that it was but a small box, about eight inches by twelve.

He felt around the ends and discovered two metal handles.

When he tried to lift it he learned that it was mighty heavy.

The bed of mud in which it was encased made it still more difficult to move.

Stepping on it he started to dig the mud away from one of the sides with his fingers when he uncovered the end of another box just like it.

"Gee! There's two of them," he breathed. "I wonder if there are any more, and I'd give something to know what's in them."

His subsequent investigations disclosed four more, or six in all, every one identical in shape, size and weight.

They had sliding covers fastened with padlocks of brass.

"This is certainly a discovery," he muttered. "If I keep on finding things in this neighborhood I'll have quite a collection of stuff which may prove very valuable. There is little danger that anybody will come out here to rob me of this kind. What I'm worried about is the safety of the box I found on the shore. There may be fifty to a hundred thousand dollars worth of British gold in it. If those rascals get their hooks on it before I can regain possession of it I must take a peep at all risk of the spot where I left it to make sure it is still there."

Joe now began to think about leaving the wreck.

His clothes were dry and he hated to wet them again.

He decided to roll them up in a bundle, straddle the log and paddled his way back to firm ground, holding his clothes out of reach of the water.

This plan he carried out, shoving the log into the water, and wading to it through the soft mud, in which he sank up to his knees.

The mud came off his legs during his passage to the point where he embarked for the wreck the night before, and which was now covered by only a foot of water.

Abandoning the log he followed the path of the cul-de-sac, and soon reached dry ground.

He went on a little further before he stopped to dress, then he got into his clothes and felt as lively as a cricket.

He followed the path back toward the shanty, keeping his eyes on the alert lest he run foul of his enemies, who might still be on the lookout for him at some unexpected point.

He saw no signs of them, however, but for all that he did not relax his caution.

The most prudent thing he could have done would have been to work around to the shore and start for the village without going near the shack, but he was anxious about the iron chest, and wanted to see if it was where he had left it.

The clump of bushes into which he had dragged it was close to the shanty, and so it was necessary for him to take chances in order to reach it.

The one point in his favor was that it lay at the back of the house.

When the shanty hove in sight he examined the clearing around it carefully before leaving the shelter of the marsh.

Neither the men nor the dogs were in sight.

Smoke was issuing from the chimney, and rising lazily into the morning air, indicating that the rascals were preparing their breakfast.

Taking the risk of one of them looking out through the back window, Joe started for the clump of bushes.

He reached it without attracting attention, and parting the branches looked in.

The box was gone.

"Gee! That's fierce!" he exclaimed. "They've got possession of it and may have opened it by this time. What can I do? Nothing, I guess. I wish I had a gun. I'd make a big fight to recover it."

It was an awful disappointment to Joe.

Although he had no assurance that the box contained the gold of the British cruiser, yet the old-fashioned look of the chest, and the spot where he had unearthed it on the shore gave him the belief that it must be the treasure receptacle.

Having calculated that the money must amount to a considerable sum—a fortune for one person—it was almost exasperating to reflect that after finding it by accident it should be taken away from him by a couple of rascals who would doubtless squander it in one way or another.

Joe couldn't leave the neighborhood without learning whether the men had opened the box or not.

If they hadn't succeeded in doing so as yet he intended to hurry to the village, tell Tom Baker all about it, and see if between them they could not form a plan for recovering the box by force.

The question was how could he find out whether they had opened the box or not?

They had it in the shanty, of course, and he could not venture there without almost certain risk of capture.

After thinking the matter over he decided to take the chances of looking into the room through the back window.

He cautiously approached the house and reached it without anything happening.

The window was half way up.

He looked in.

He saw Grimes outside the door feeding the two dogs.

Gridley was cooking eggs in a pan at the stove.



The table was laid with two plates, and two cups and saucers, with knives, forks and spoons, and other things.

Joe glanced around the floor.

His heart gave a thump when he saw the iron box standing against the wall.

The cover, in a badly damaged condition, stood open.

Instead of a pile of yellow gold coin, or bags full of it, the box was filled with cutlasses and old-fashioned pistols. Joe could hardly believe his eyes, so sure had he been that the chest contained treasure.

While he was staring at it Gridley walked to the window and looked out.

Barely six inches separated their faces as their eyes met. The surprise on both sides was so complete that for a moment they stood quite motionless.

Then with a fierce imprecation Gridley thrust his arm through the window and tried to seize the boy.

Joe eluded the clutch and made a dash for the bushes that lined the shore.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### JOE MEETS THE PEDDLER.

The fleeing lad heard Gridley shout to his companion outside, and he knew that pursuit would be immediate.

He had his club with him, which he had carried over to the wreck and brought back, and he determined to put up a desperate resistance against capture.

He felt confident that he could out-run the men, but the dogs were certain to embarrass his flight so much that his enemies would be able to overtake him before he could get very far from the shanty.

However, he was resolved to do his best to get away.

He sped along the hard beach toward the village as fast as he could run.

He soon heard the shouts of the men and the yelping of the dogs behind.

On he flew at top speed, but closer came the dogs each moment.

They were almost up to him, and he was about to stop and give them battle, when around the turn of the shore came a horse and a covered wagon.

Joe recognized the man on the seat as the peddler he had seen talking with the ship chandler.

The boy made a sweeping lurch at the foremost dog with his club and then ran up to the wagon which the peddler had reined in.

"What's the trouble, my lad?" asked the peddler.

"Those rascals behind are trying to capture me with the help of their dogs," replied Joe. "They're a couple of liquor smugglers who know I've learned too much about them and their business, and they want to keep me prisoner so I won't get the chance to inform on them."

"Say you so," said the peddler, in a brisk tone. "Jump up and I'll see that they don't touch you."

Joe made another swoop with his club at Major, who had attempted to spring at him, and landed a heavy blow on his fore shoulder, causing the animal to fall on the sand.

He then sprang up on the seat and was safe.

Grimes and Gridley, seeing how matters were, stopped and whistled to the dogs.

The peddler started on toward them.

The two rascals looked the picture of disappointment as the wagon passed them at a jog trot, and Joe could not help giving them a grin of triumph.

The peddler said nothing to them, but he eyed them both sharply.

"What is your name, my lad?" asked the peddler.

"Joe Sargent."

"You live in the village, I suppose?"

"I landed in Seaport yesterday morning and hired a room from a widow named Baker, so I suppose I live there."

"Only arrived there yesterday, eh? Where did you come from?"

"Rockville."

"Do your parents live in that place?"

"No, sir; I'm an orphan, with not a relative that I know of in the world."

"Perhaps you'll tell me about those two men who you say are liquor smugglers, and how you discovered that fact?"

"I'd rather say nothing about them, sir."

"Why not?" asked the peddler, sharply.

"Because I want to turn the information over to the Government and get the reward. I'm down on my luck and need money badly."

"You can tell me without fear of losing your reward," said the man.

"Well, being as you've helped me out of a bad scrape I'll make a deal with you. I'm willing to divide the reward with you if you'll agree to treat me fair," said Joe.

"No, my lad; I promise you that you shall have the whole of the reward if you can furnish evidence against those men that will connect them with the smuggling of liquor on this shore," said the peddler.

"Say, are you a peddler or are you a revenue officer in disguise?" asked the boy suddenly.

"I'm a peddler, of course. What made you think I was an officer in disguise," asked the man, looking keenly at Joe.

"I heard Sam Smith, the ship chandler's son, warn his father to be careful about what he said to you, as he believed you were an officer in the service of the Government, and pretended to be a peddler in order to pick up information without suspicion," replied Joe.

"Why should young Smith consider it necessary to warn his father against me? Is the old man mixed up with the liquor crowd?"

"Did you buy five kegs of brandy from him and help dig them out of the sand early this morning?"

"I did. He told me that he accidentally found those kegs there one day, and has been keeping the knowledge quiet with the view of profiting by it. But how did you learn that I bought the kegs of brandy from him?"

"Because I heard him tell the two men back yonder that he had sold them to you. The kegs were not hidden in the sand then, but somewhere else with a lot more. Those five kegs that you bought were buried just about dark in the place where you found them with Smith's help."

"Indeed! You can prove that, I suppose?"

"No, I can't, but I can swear it's the truth."



"Do you intend to carry your information to the inspector of the district at Belfast?"

"I do, if nothing happens to prevent me. Maybe you'll object as you have purchased those five kegs and want to realize on them without interference. You needn't fear that I will give you away. I won't say anything about the five kegs at all, as I can furnish the Government with plenty of information aside from them."

"Look here, my lad, I believe you are honest and intend to do the right thing, so I think I can trust you. I am not a peddler but a revenue officer in disguise."

"That's a fact, is it?" said Joe.

"It is. Now that I have confided my secret to you I want you to make a clean breast of everything connected with these men."

"I'd like to be sure that you really are a revenue officer."

The bogus peddler put his hand in one of his hip pockets and pulled out his official shield or badge which bore a number and the Government emblem.

"Are you satisfied?" he said.

"I am," replied Joe. "I will tell you my story."

He began with his arrival in Seaport and his hunt for work, and then told how he had taken refuge inside the coiled chain cable in front of the ship chandlery shop and had been awakened by the voices of old man Smith and his son.

He repeated all that had passed between the two just before the bogus peddler came that way on foot with his boxes.

"I heard Smith invite you inside to take a drink of his applejack, and when you went in with him I jumped out of the chain cable and listened at the window to all you and he said to each other."

"You did, eh?" said the revenue man, grimly.

"Yes, sir. When you started to go I sneaked around to the rear of the building to wait till you got out of the way," went on Joe. "I found an open window there and saw Sam Smith and his mother talking together. As they were speaking about the smuggling business, too, I deemed it my duty, as well as to my interest, to listen. I heard enough to confirm my previous suspicions that old man Smith was connected with the business. I might have heard more but that Sam happened to look up and caught me eavesdropping. I had to cut to save myself."

Joe then told the man how he made the acquaintance of Tom Baker, and how he went to the beach with him for a load of sand.

Incidentally he spoke about how he got a job to work for Captain Gosport, and that the captain expected him to start in that morning, but he guessed his employer would be disappointed under the circumstances that had since transpired.

Then he went on to tell how interested he was in the statement he had heard Smith make about the box of treasure that was supposed to have been on board the British cruiser that was wrecked near the point in the year 1814.

He told the officer how he walked down to the shore to kill time till supper would be ready at the Baker house, and how that led to the adventures which had happened to him during the night, all of which he described in detail to his interested listener, and which included the talk he had overheard between the ship chandler and the two

rascals from whose clutches the officer's fortunate coming had saved him.

"Well, my lad, you have had a strenuous time of it," smiled the officer; "but you will be the gainer by it if the rascals don't take alarm in the meanwhile and remove those kegs of liquor from the swamp. Did you notice pretty nearly what part of the marsh they are concealed in?"

"I know it was close to the shanty for it didn't take them long to bring out the five kegs which I suppose you have in your wagon," replied Joe.

"Good. I dare say we will have little trouble in finding them. I am on my way now to the life-saving station a few miles down the shore. I shall press some of the men there into my service to save time, as I judge I have none to lose. We will start back right away, but you will have a chance to get some breakfast at the station before we set out," said the officer.

In due time they reached the station and the officer introduced himself to the man in charge and requested the loan of four of his men to make the seizure of the brandy and capture the two smugglers at the shanty if they were there.

While the arrangements were under way, Joe was provided with breakfast, and by the time he had eaten all he wanted, the expedition was ready to set out.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FINDING OF THE KEGS.

The peddler's stock in trade, what remained of it, and the five kegs of brandy, were left behind at the station, and the four coastguardsmen took their seats inside of the vehicle, which proceeded back along the beach at a good pace with the officer and Joe on the front seat.

It was close on to eleven when the wagon was driven up to the shanty and all hands got out.

Grimes and Gridley, as well as the two dogs, were conspicuous by their absence.

They had eaten a hasty breakfast, and without disturbing anything in the house had taken their departure, whether to return or not later on no one could say but themselves.

"They are gone," said the officer. "Well, it isn't more than I expected, but I hope they haven't removed the brandy kegs to a new hiding-place."

Joe showed the officer the iron box he dug up on the beach, and over which he had experienced so much physical, as well as mental trouble.

"There was no gold in it after all," he said. "Nothing but cutlasses and old-fashioned pistols."

"You have my sympathy, for your find has proved a disappointment to you. Still the arms have a certain value, as relics, and you have a right to dispose of them for your own benefit," said the officer. "Now we'll make a hunt for the kegs. Point out the direction you believe they lie in."

"I was bound to that tree behind the house when the men went into the marsh and hauled the five kegs out. It was quite dark at the time, but it seems to me they went in about there," said Joe, pointing.



The officer sent the men into the marsh at the point indicated with orders to search carefully.

While they were so engaged Joe happened to look toward the line of bushes and he saw Sam Smith covertly watching the proceedings.

He called the officer inside the house and told him about Sam's presence.

"We must catch him," said the revenue man.

"I'll sneak around to the beach from the back of the house and cut off his retreat," said Joe. "If he tries to escape by running I guess I'll be able to overtake him. You must watch on this side of the bushes to prevent him from reaching the upper path to the village."

They examined the bushes through the front window and the officer caught sight of Sam's countenance at a different point.

Joe left the shanty by the door and went around to the back, the officer following him out and standing apparently interested only in the marsh where his men were; but he had his eyes on the alert, pending some move on Sam's part.

Joe went through the bushes to the shore and then started to get between the concealed Sam and the village.

This he soon accomplished and then he made for the point where the ship chandlery's son was on the watch.

The sand gave out no sound and so Sam had no suspicion that anybody was about to take him from behind until Joe located and pounced upon him.

Grabbing the struggling youth by the collar, Joe hauled him out of the bushes on the marsh side.

"Here, what are you doin'?" protested Sam, putting up the best resistance he knew how.

At this point the revenue officer came up.

"I believe your name is Sam Smith?" he said.

"Well, what of it?" replied Sam, sullenly.

"You know the two men who live in that shanty, don't you?"

"Don't know nothin' about them."

"Look here, young man, I arrest you as an associate and accomplice of the gang of liquor smugglers who have been carrying their business on in this neighborhood."

"I don't know nothin'," almost blubbered the boy, who was frightened out of his shoes at the prospect ahead of him.

"All right. When we get you into court we'll find out whether you know anything or not," said the officer, suddenly snapping a pair of handcuffs on Sam's wrists.

The touch of the bracelets gave Sam heart failure.

"What do you want me to tell?" he whimpered.

"Where the liquor kegs are hidden in the marsh, if you know."

"Don't know nothin' about 'em."

"Fetch him along, Sargent," said the officer.

Sam was forced to seat himself on the bench under the tree, and was tied to it.

"I'll get square with you," he said to Joe.

"How?" grinned Sargent.

"Never you mind how, but I will, if I die for it."

At that interesting juncture the coastguardsmen appeared from the marsh, each lugging a dripping keg of the smuggled brandy.

"Ha! you've found them," said the officer, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Yes, sir," said the foremost man, touching his hat. "There seems to be quite a bunch of them—two dozen, I should judge."

"Good. Be careful that you miss none," said the officer.

The kegs were quickly brought from the marsh, and they counted up thirty in all.

"Not such a bad haul," said the revenue man, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "When these are sold, young man, you'll be entitled to one-half of the proceeds," he added, slapping Joe on the back. "If they fetch anywhere near their wholesale value, as they probably will, I should think you are likely to pocket something like \$300. Not so bad, eh?"

"That will be quite a windfall for me, sir," said Joe.

The officer then gave orders to load the kegs on the wagon.

When that was accomplished, Sam Smith was put in the vehicle, too.

The coastguardsmen followed, and with the officer and Joe on the front seat again the wagon started for the village.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCLUSION.

When they reached the ship chandlery store they came to a halt and the officer went in and placed Jacob Smith, to his consternation, under arrest.

He was ordered to get into the wagon.

"Now, my lad, we are going back to the coastguard station," said the officer to Joe, "and from there I shall go on to Rockville, and thence to Belfast. There is no need for you to accompany us; but I want to know where to find you, for at the proper time you will be required to come to Belfast and appear against the Smiths, and the other men if we catch them in the meantime. All your expenses will be paid, and when the liquor shall have been sold you will get your prize-money. You had better take up that job with Captain Gosport, for that will keep you employed until the Government wants you."

"Yes, sir, I shall report at the captain's place at once, and explain why I was unable to show up sooner," said Joe.

"Very well. And now goodbye till I see you again."

They shook hands and parted, Joe starting for Captain Gosport's house.

The captain frowned when he saw Joe, for it was then nearly one o'clock, and he had expected his new helper at seven that morning, according to arrangement.

Joe's explanation rather astonished the captain.

He accepted it as a matter of course, and finding the boy had had no dinner he took him into the kitchen and had the cook prepare something for him, after which he put Joe at work cutting the grass on his extensive lawn.

At half-past five Tom Baker called at the captain's house to find out whether his new friend had turned up there or not.

Joe was at work in one of the garden beds helping the captain fix some of the flowers when Tom appeared.

"Where in creation have you been, Joe?" Tom asked.



"We kept supper waiting some time last evening, expecting you to appear. I was around here about ten to-day, but Captain Gosport said he had seen nothing of you. Give an account of yourself, old man."

"Let it go till this evening. I am too busy now. I've got to call at your house for my traps, and then I'll tell you all about my adventures since I parted from you yesterday afternoon," said Joe.

He went off home, and Joe kept on with his work until it was finished and the captain gave him something else to do.

Finally the cook called him to do some chores for her, then he had his supper in the kitchen, and shortly afterward he started for the Baker cottage.

Tom was eagerly awaiting his appearance, and the story that Joe told him made his eyes bulge with astonishment.

"So old man Smith and Sam have been arrested on the charge of aiding and abetting a gang of liquor smugglers?" said Tom.

"Serves him right for trying to cheat the Government," said Joe.

Then the boys began talking about the iron box that Joe found on the shore.

"So you thought that contained the gold of the British cruiser?" chuckled Tom.

"I was sure of it, and when you see the box you'll say it was a natural mistake for me to make."

"And all it held was a lot of old pistols and cutlasses?"

Joe nodded.

"I'm going after it to-morrow in the captain's light wagon. I want you to go along and help me get it to the village."

"I'll ask Mr. Jones to let me go with you. Stop for me at the house where I'm working."

For reasons of his own Joe did not tell Tom about six small heavy boxes which he had discovered aboard the wreck in the marsh.

He intended to borrow a small sailboat on Sunday and take Tom around to the wreck with him and get possession of the boxes, provided he was able to force his way into that part of the marsh from the inlet.

Next day when Joe appeared with the captain's wagon at the place where Mr. Jones was carrying on his building operations he found Tom ready to go with him to the shanty to get the iron box full of obsolete weapons.

They reached the house in due time and found it still untenanted.

The box was too heavy for them to put on the wagon as it stood, so they took the arms out of it and then got it into the wagon.

The weapons were then put back in it, and as there was nothing more to detain them they drove back to the village.

Joe carried his prize to the captain's house, and that personage was very much interested in its contents.

He offered to buy a pair of the pistols and a couple of the cutlasses and Joe said he could have them for the use of his wagon.

The captain refused to acquire them so cheaply, and handed Joe a couple of dollars.

When Sunday came around Joe used the money to hire a small sailboat, in which he and Tom started for the marsh.

They found some difficulty in getting through the rushes that filled up the entrance to the more open water where the wreck lay, but they got through in the end and reached the old wreck.

The tide was well up at the time, and they had to wait some time for it to go down before they could get at the boxes.

They had brought a small shovel along and with it Joe removed the mud and with Tom's help got the boxes into the boat.

Then they started to return to the village.

When they arrived at the wharf Tom remained in the boat while Joe went to the captain's house to get a horse and wagon to carry the boxes, which were finally landed in the carriage house.

"Let's break one open and see what's in it," said Tom.

Joe was quite willing to satisfy his curiosity as to what was in the boxes, so with a heavy hammer they attacked the padlock on one.

When they did get the box open they were not prepared for the sight that greeted their astonished eyes.

The box was full of English sovereigns, laid in even piles.

Roughly valued at \$5 apiece, which was about fifteen cents in excess of their actual value, the contents of the box footed up \$15,000.

There seemed little doubt that the other boxes each held a similar sum of gold, so Joe estimated his entire find as worth about \$90,000.

The discovery was imparted to the captain, who was profoundly astonished at the amazing luck of his new boy.

Through the captain's good offices the English gold was turned into American money and Joe found himself worth about \$85,000.

He subsequently received \$275 as his share of the sale of the smuggled brandy, and \$25 more from the sale of the arms in the iron box.

Jacob Smith was fined \$1,500 and got two years in prison, while Sam was allowed to go free under suspended sentence.

Grimes and Gridley were never captured.

Joe's good luck did not prevent him from working for the captain for several months, during which time he saw a good deal of Suzette Castle.

Then he went to Rockland, bought out a business that suited him and Tom, and the two boys went into partnership together.

In the end Joe married Suzette Castle, and thus his air-castle came out true, and so we draw the curtain on the boy who played a lone hand and got the gold of the wrecked English cruiser.

Next week's issue will contain "WILL FOX OF WALL STREET; OR, THE SUCCESS OF A YOUNG BROKER."

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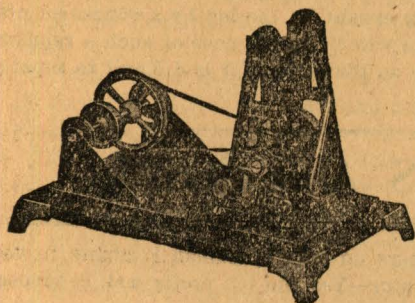


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## GOOD STORIES.

In 1868 three of Hagenbeck's elephants, just brought from Africa, were attacked by rats, which ate through the wooden floor on which they (the elephants) stood and gnawed the animals' feet. All three died, no doubt from fright rather than from pain. Mr. Robinson, in quoting this story as "the most dreadful!" apparently in his collection of anecdotes of elephants attacked by puny enemies, seems to be unaware that the same thing has happened in England. The first chronicled instance, we believe, belongs not to the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens, but to Clifton, and has been duly recorded by Frank Buckland. But there has been trouble in the London Gardens before now with rats attacking the large animals; the old hippopotamus Guy Fawkes was one of the sufferers.

Of the total value, \$337,097, of mica produced in the United States in 1910, North Carolina produced to the value of \$230,460, according to a report of Douglas B. Sterrett of the United States Geological Survey. The 1910 production came from seven States—North Carolina, South Dakota, New Hampshire, Colorado, South Carolina, New Mexico and Massachusetts—named in the order of the value of their output. South Carolina and New Mexico returned to the list of mica producing States in 1910, no production having been reported from these States in 1909. A small output was reported from Massachusetts, which had reported no production for several years. Virginia, Alabama, New York, Georgia and Maine failed to report an output of mica in 1910, though each reported a production in 1909.

Frogs and toads are evidently not the only creatures able to survive a lengthy burial alive. A little common crawfish was recently restored to his native element, alive and kicking, after being imprisoned since the winter before last in a solid block of ice. This particular crawfish began his unusual adventures when a small prairie river froze up for the season and caught him napping too near the surface. In time his prison became part of the annual ice crop, and until this spring he slept in an icehouse. Still unnoticed he passed into the melting saltiness of an ice cream freezer and thence into a dish. There, melted out at last, some one came across the crawfish, quite alive, though not kicking very much. That some one was a good Samaritan. He took the crawfish home and gave it the run of a tub of water. Once in its native element the crawfish gained the greater freedom of a neighboring creek.

There have been made abroad experiments with an octopus in a specially devised tank of sea water, in order to test the truth of the many stories told of monster cephalopods dragging human victims to the sea-bottom. In the tank with the octopus there was placed a "dummy" of the same specific gravity as a man, and this was baited with a crab. Attracted by this tempting morsel, the octopus made for the figure, seized it in its powerful arms, and tried to drag it underwater, without success. It then urged its body toward the edge of the tank and holding the glass with some of its arms, it dragged its prey beneath the surface and crushed the crab-shell with its powerful jaws. It is believed that these experiments afford proof that the octopus can only drag its victims far below the water near rocks to which it can attach its suckers. There is one spot in the Bay of Naples where these creatures attain a large size, and now and then a fisherman is reported missing. It is thought that such disappearances are due to the unfortunate man being caught by the leg by a concealed octopus and dragged underwater. In the case of such a repulsive and powerful creature as the octopus it is difficult to separate fact from fiction.

## JOKES AND JESTS.

**The Captured**—Is there no milk of human kindness in your composition? **The Captor**—Yes, but it's pretty well condensed.

**Bill**—Those two fellows work like bees. **Jill**—Is that right? **Bill**—Yes; why, hardly a day passes that they don't "sting" somebody.

**She**—I heard about the elopement. Has her mother forgiven them? **He**—I think not. I understand she has gone to live with them.

**"Why so sad, old man?"** "The doctor wants my wife to travel two months." "I understand—sorry for you." "Understand? No, you don't—she will not go!"

**Office Boy**—What am I fired for? **Employer**—For constantly smoking cigarettes. You have heard, haven't you, that where there is so much smoke there must be some fire?

**"Father,"** said little Rollo, "what is the ultimate consumer?" **"He is the last person, my son, that an article reaches in its commercial existence."** "I know what you mean. He's a man who goes into a hotel and orders chicken hash."

The depot of Meridian, Tex., is about a mile from the business part of the town. One night a sleepy, weary traveling man said to the darky who was driving him to the hotel: "Old man, why in the name of heaven did they put this depot so far from town?" The darky scratched his head in thought, and replied: "Waal, boss, I's fo'ced to admit dat I hasn't give de matter s'ficient cogitation, but jes' jumped up fer a answer like dis. I s'pose dey done dat so as to have de depot as near as possible to de railroad."

Judge A. A. Adams, of the Indiana Appellate Court, tells a story of a man who was a good horse trader, but, through lack of a mathematical education, was unable to determine his per cent. of profits. "This man," relates Judge Adams, "made a good trade and he was anxious to know his real per cent. of profit, so he consulted a school teacher. 'I bought a horse the other day for \$25 and sold it for \$175; now, what was my per cent. of profit?' he asked the teacher. 'That,' replied the teacher, 'was not profit; it was larceny.'"



## THE SISTER'S SECRET

By Alexander Armstrong

"Please don't, Philip, you hurt me."

The dark, handsome face softened suddenly, and Philip bent and kissed the soft little fingers, crimson from his angry pressure.

"Forgive me, Mattie, I did not know. How fierce I must seem to you. The truth is, I was beside myself. And you must see that I have reason. Think of it. An arm that was not mine encircling that slender waist. It was enough to drive one frantic. I must have an explanation, or our engagement is at an end."

The girl raised her eyes to his face for a moment, a mist of trouble clouding their azure; then she drooped them again sadly.

"I cannot say more than I have, Philip. I tell you again that your suspicions are cruel and unjust, further than that I cannot. If you do not trust me, it is best that we should part."

"It is as I thought. You are only glad to be rid of the old love before you received the new."

He caught her face between his two hands and held it while he studied it, half angrily, half tenderly.

The girl bore his scrutiny for a moment bravely.

Then the red lips began to quiver, and the eyes to fill with tears.

He kissed her suddenly.

"That is my farewell to love and faith. Good-by to both."

Then with long strides, he hastened away, as though afraid to trust himself to look back.

Mattie watched him until out of sight; then, with a long, sobbing sigh, she said:

"It is better thus. I could not keep my secret safe with that distrustful, passionate nature ever on the watch. Oh, Charlie—Charlie, what am I suffering for you!"

Philip, as he said, went away from the place, not intending to return until he had overcome his great love. But nature proved too strong for his resolution. He was drawn back as though by invisible cords.

He was a young physician, and had been taken into partnership with the oldest and most skillful practitioner in the town.

When he reached his house, after a few days' absence, Dr. Trueman met him at the door.

"You are just in time, Philip. I have been called in haste to old Mrs. Sturnburgh's dying bed, and that poor girl at the Hall is in too critical a state to be neglected. I will trust her to you."

Philip's lips turned of an ashen paleness.

"Whom did you say?"

"Poor little Mattie Kenniston. It seems weeks instead of days that I've been attending her. She was stricken down suddenly with such a fearful type of brain fever that I've been there three or four times a day trying to keep her from dying. It's near the crisis now."

Philip wanted to hear no more. He took his case of medicines, and hastened as though on wings to the Hall.

An old servant met him at the door. She had evidently been watching for the doctor's arrival.

"How is Miss Kenniston to-day?" was Philip's whispered question.

"Quiet, poor lamb, at last. She's still sleeping like—for the first time since she was took. She's always been a-saying to herself: 'Innocent! innocent! Oh, Philip, trust me!' Then

she'll ramble off about Charley. I can't for the life of me tell who they is the pretty creetur means. It's most likely some of them stories she likes to read has got into her head, and in her fever she thinks she's acting in em."

Poor Philip! Well he knew what it meant. As he went to her bedside, he felt as though he had killed her.

There she lay, as the nurse said, quiet. But it was the calm of exhaustion.

One short week only since he had seen her—but the rounded outlines had grown strangely sharp, and the luxuriant hair which had clustered about her temples in tendril-like curls had been shorn close to her head.

He bent over her, and listened to her breathing, critically. Then he turned to the nurse:

"Do not let her be disturbed on any account. I will be in again in the morning. If she awakens, give her this."

The nurse took the powder from him, and he left the room.

At the gate he met a young man. At the first glance he recognized him to be the one whom he had seen walking under the trees with Mattie—his arm around her waist, and her eyes looking up with an expression of intense interest into his face.

It was in a secluded nook at the rear of the Kenniston estate, where few ever went.

Philip, not finding Mattie at the house, had thought to find her there, and had gone in search of her only to be torn by jealous rage at her supposed duplicity.

He said now:

"Perhaps it will be as well to defer your visit. Miss Kenniston is at the point of death."

Aggrieved as Philip felt himself, he could not but feel sorry for the stranger. He stood a moment as though benumbed. Then he said, huskily:

"Miss Kenniston—Mattie, dying. I must see her. What I have to say is of great importance. It would almost bring her loving spirit back to earth to hear it."

The answer came cold and decisive:

"To all appearance Miss Kenniston is beyond help. At any rate, all depends on absolute quiet."

"Oh, my little sister! I fear her tender heart has been overburdened with my troubles."

Philip caught his arm convulsively.

"Did I hear aright? Is Miss Kenniston your sister?"

"Yes, my darling, only sister. Though no one knows of it. I have been in trouble, and all because I was taken for some one else. For the past four years I have been under a cloud of disgrace, though an innocent man. That is why my father bought this place, and removed from his old home. He couldn't stand having the name connected with a criminal, and he wasn't quite sure of my guilt, neither was he confident of the truth of my denial; so he asked me to keep at a respectful distance from his new residence. Mattie, thank Heaven, saved my faith in humanity. She never doubted me. To-day I came hither with a light heart, for all is cleared up. I have the dying deposition of the rascal who had kept out of the hands of justice, leaving me to suffer for his actions. That is why I said that my news might hasten Mattie's recovery. If she dies, the light will go out of my life. Dear, unselfish, little sister.

Philip's heart absolutely sang for joy at the thought that Mattie had been true and loyal to him as she had so solemnly assured him—though through it also surged a wave of sorrow and remorse at his own cruelty.

He caught the young man's hand and wrung it warmly.

"You are the Charley, then, about whom she has been raving in her delirium? You are right. As soon as she awakens her mind shall be put at ease about you, and," he



thought to himself, "About one other rash, unjust being who does not deserve that she should live to bless him with her forgiveness."

The next morning he went again to her bedside.

She had not come out of her heavy slumber. So he stationed himself by her to watch the turn of the disease.

For several hours there was no change. Then she moved and opened her eyes.

He gave her her medicine. She took it obediently, all the time studying his face with her troubled blue eyes.

After a time she seemed to comprehend that it was Philip. Then, with a look of intense pleading, she whispered:

"Forgive—"

He stayed the words upon her lips with a kiss.

"It is all right, darling. I know all. Your Brother Charles is here—not only innocent, but proven so. Now you need worry no more. All you have to do is to get well and make us happy."

With a sigh of content the heavy eyes closed. The opiate had taken effect, and once more slumber had shut out the scenes of the outer world.

After this her recovery was rapid; and when, a few months after, the fond old father gave her away at the altar to be loved and cherished at the hearthstone of another, he was not left alone—his son, restored once more to his proper place among men, stood beside him.

Charlie Kenniston says that his sister Mattie's undoubting confidence in his innocence at the time when all others turned against him was his salvation.

He might have lost all hope, and, in his hot anger at human injustice, have really sunk into the ranks of criminal life.

He did not know until long years after how near Mattie came to wrecking her own happiness. Then he said:

"It was just like you, Mattie. When we were both little toddlers you always managed to bear the brunt of my misdoings. I remember drubbing several boys among my schoolmates for nick-naming you 'Mattie, the Martyr.'"

Philip, who was also a listener to Charlie's speech, thought how nearly that last trial had won for his darling the martyr's crown, and consigned him to perpetual mourning for his unreasoning harshness and cruelty to her whom he loved better than life itself.

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## SNAKE STORIES.

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Last evening, three cavalry soldiers sat in a South town lager beer saloon, and over their foaming glasses and pipes, rehearsed their experiences during last summer, on the plains and barren sands of New Mexico and Arizona. They were brawny, muscular fellows, with bright, intelligent eyes, and weather-beaten faces, and that indifferent, matter-of-course air characteristic of the frontiersman and old soldier.

"Snakes!" exclaimed one of the saberers, as he blew away a cloud of smoke that almost concealed his countenance, "I thought I had seen snakes among the buttes or clay hills of Wyoming, but I never knew what reptiles were until I got down into Arizona. Why, I've seen fifty tarantulas in a single file column, the leader as big as the rim of your hat, following a buffalo trail to the water to drink. Tarantulas always follow each other in Indian file. Some people think that a tarantula's bite is not poisonous, but I tell you it is certain death. I've seen a tarantula jump four feet to strike a horse in the face, and in fifteen minutes afterward that horse's face would swell to an enormous size. He would act as though he had the blind staggers, and then in a little while drop dead.

"I was once out hunting, and got very close to a fine-looking buck, and was about to give him a shot, when my interest was

excited by his strange conduct. His eyes appeared fixed upon some object on the ground, and through the telescope of my rifle I was able to see, close before him, an enormous rattlesnake. He had coiled himself into that peculiar position the rattlesnake takes just as it is about to strike. Instantly the deer stamped upon him with both his front feet, and trod the reptile into a jelly. I shot the deer and got the snake. It had twelve enormous rattles. All the wild animals appear to be on the look-out for reptiles. A wolf never lies down without walking around and around in a circle for some moments, until it has trod every inch of ground, almost, upon which it lies. So with the elk, deer and antelope, or any wild animals."

"But why are not more persons bitten by the moccasin than are," inquired a bystander. "I hear they are very difficult reptiles to kill."

"Yes, they are difficult to kill, unless you know how to make them kill themselves," replied the frontiersman and scout. "The first thing a moccasin does when it is alarmed is to inflate itself with the air. Then it is as flabby as a sponge, and if you were to hurl a stone at it, it would have no seeming effect. The way to dispose of the moccasin—and I have put hundreds of them out of the way—is just to strike it with a switch or your riding-whip, so as to sting it, and it will instantly bite itself, and in three minutes be a dead snake."

"That is a strange story that Washington Irving tells in one of his sketches about the prairie dog village. He says that the little prairie owl, and a rattlesnake, and the prairie dog itself, live very comfortably and agreeably in the latter's burrow. How's that?"

"I don't think Washington Irving knew what he was talking about when he wrote that. A rattlesnake is never found in a prairie dog village. These little fellows guard their villages with a cordon of sentinels, who set up a chattering upon the approach of any creature sufficient to deter all except a human creature from entering within their demesnes. No; if the owl or rattlesnake becomes a tenant of a prairie dog village, it is after the village has been deserted by its original founders."

"So your matter-of-fact statement summarily disposes of the sketch book writer's romance?"

"Yes; I think the rattlesnakes of Sleepy Hollow must have been a different class of reptiles from those found on the plains."

"What do they live on?"

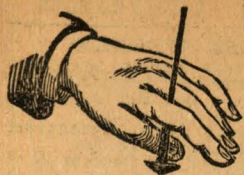
"Whatever they can get hold of—flies, grass-hoppers, berries and toads. They are very fond of fresh meat, and a good-sized toad is a luscious feast for a rattlesnake."

"Yes," spoke up another soldier, who had been listening with approving silence to his comrade's recital of the habits of the reptile; "but even the toad knows how to defend itself against the voracity of the rattlesnake. A rattlesnake never bites anything it swallows, and so it will cram a toad down its throat whole. I once saw a rattlesnake about six feet long, trying to capture a large toad. The toad adopted a novel method to thwart the reptile's intentions. The snake had come upon the toad unawares, and it could not turn tail and jump, else the snake would spring and catch it in its jaws. So the toad took up a small stick, about six inches long, holding it at the center in its mouth. The snake's mouth could not be distended to a width of six inches, and so, facing the snake, with the stick in its mouth, the toad wearied its would-be destroyer out of patience, and finally he gave up his efforts and crawled away. The toad dropped the stick and hopped to a safer retreat."

"Some of a snake story, that, my friend."

"Yes, but as true as Washington Irving's story of the snake, prairie-dog and owl, which all who read believe unless they have been enlightened to the contrary by someone who has lived on the plains."





**The Magic Nail.**—A common nail is given for examination, and then instantly shown pierced through the finger; and yet, when taken out, the finger is found to be perfectly uninjured, and the nail is again given to be examined. Nicely finished. Price, 10c.

CHAS. UNGER, 316 UNION ST., JERSEY CITY, N. J.



**THE JUMPING FROG.**—This little novelty creates a world of laughter. Its chief attractiveness is that it takes a few seconds before leaping high in the air so that when set, very innocently along side of an unsuspecting person, he is suddenly startled by the wonderful activity of this frog.

Price by mail, postpaid, 15c. each.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



**CACHOO OR SNEEZING POWDER.**—The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every nook and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 15 times.

Price by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

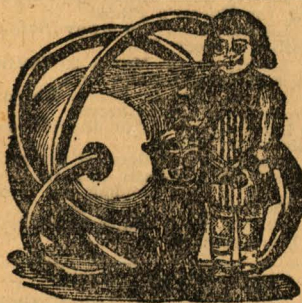


## Good Luck Puzzle

It consists of three horseshoes fastened together. Only a very clever person can take off the closed horseshoe from the two linked horseshoes. But it can be done in a moment when the secret is known.

Price by mail, 10 cents each

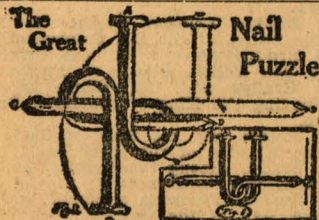
FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



**A NEW SQUIRT BADGE.**—Great Fun for the Million. Wear it in your buttonhole and then press the bulb and watch the other fellow run.

Price, 14c.

CHAS. UNGER, 316 UNION ST., JERSEY CITY, N. J.



**NAIL PUZZLE.**—Made of two metal nails linked together. Keep folks guessing; easy to take them apart when you know how. Directions with every one. Price, 6c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

## LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.



The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow.

Price, 6 cents; 3 for 15 cents; one dozen, 50 cents, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



**COMIC MOTTO PENT-DANT BUTTON.**—50-line celluloid button, in assorted colors with colored ribbon streamers; to the end is attached a metal or china novelty appropriate to the reading of the button. We always add new motto buttons with novelties attached, according to what song or fad is out. We mention a few of the latest: "I Love My Wife, But O You Kid," "I Am Looking for the Merry Widow," "I'm Afraid to go Home in the Dark," etc.

Price, 7c., postpaid.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



**BLACK-EYE JOKE.**—New and amusing joker. The victim is told to hold the tube close to his eye so as to exclude all light from the back, and then to revolve the tube until pictures appear in the center. In trying to locate the pictures he will receive the finest black-eye you ever saw. We furnish a small box of blackening preparation with each tube, so the joke can be used indefinitely. Those not in the trick will be caught every time. Absolutely harmless. Price by mail, 15c. each, 2 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

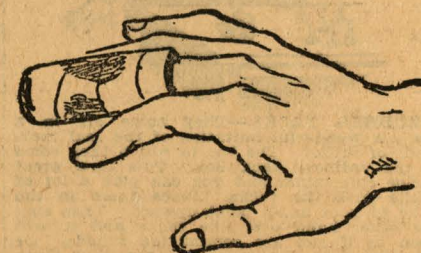
## Good Luck Banks

Price 10 Cents

Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickle-plated brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied.

L. SENARENS

347 WINTHROP ST., BROOKLYN, N. Y.



**IMITATION CUT FINGER.**—A cardboard finger, carefully bandaged with linen, and the side and end are blood stained. When you slip it on your finger and show it to your friends, just give a groan or two, nurse it up, and pull a look of pain. You will get nothing but sympathy until you give them the laugh. Then duck!

Price 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

## PIGGY IN A COFFIN.



This is a wicked pig that died at an early age, and here he is in his coffin ready for burial. There will be a great many mourners at his funeral, for this coffin, pretty as it looks, is

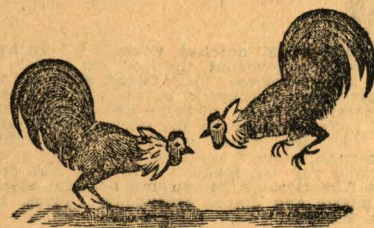
very tricky, and the man who gets it open will feel real grief. The coffin is made of metal, perfectly shaped and beautifully lacquered. The trick is to open it to see the pig. The man that tries it gets his fingers and feelings hurt, and piggy comes out to grunt at his victims. The tubular end of the coffin, which every one (in trying to open) presses inward, contains a needle which stabs the victim in his thumb or finger every time. This is the latest and a very "impressive" trick. It can be opened easily by anyone in the secret, and as a neat catch-joke to save yourself from a bore is unsurpassed.

Price 10 cents, 3 for 25 cents, postpaid; 1 dozen by express 75 cents.

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## THE FIGHTING ROOSTERS

A full blooded pair of fighting game cocks for ten cents. These lilliputian fighters have real feathers yellow legs and fiery red combs, their movements



when fighting, are perfectly natural and life-like, and the secret of their movements is known only to the operator who can cause them to battle with each other as often and as long as desired. Independent of their fighting proclivities they make very pretty mantel ornaments.

Price for the pair in a strong box, 10 cents, 3 pairs for 25 cents, by mail postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

## MINIATURE COMPASS CHARM.



A beautiful charm, to be worn on the watch chain. It consists of a true and perfect compass, to which is attached, by a pivot, a powerful magnifying glass. When not in use the magnifying glass fits closely inside the compass and is not seen. The compass is protected by a glass crystal, and is handsomely silver-nickel plated and burnished, presenting a very attractive appearance. Here you have a reliable compass, a powerful magnifying glass, and a handsome charm, all in one. It is a Parisian novelty, entirely new.

Price, 25 cents, by mail, postpaid.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.

## MAGIC ROSE AND CARD.



An excellent trick. You show an ordinary playing card, holding it at arm's length, with your sleeves turned back to show that you have nothing hidden in your sleeves; allow the audience to watch the card for a moment, when you quietly pass it into the other hand, without moving your position, and with this the card disappears entirely, and in your hand is a beautiful full-blown rose. After a moment's pause you return the rose to the other hand and once more the card is seen. You can perform the trick, if desired, without removing the card from the hand, simply by dropping a handkerchief over your hand for an instant. This excellent trick can be performed any number of times without fear of detection. Full printed instructions with each trick.

Price, 20 cents; 3 for 50 cents, sent by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



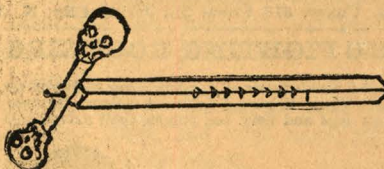
## THE MYSTIC RING.



**A Brand-New Trick, Just Out.**—Puzzling, Mystifying and Perplexing. A metal ring is handed around for examination, and is found to be solid, unbroken, unjanneped iron. A cane, a pencil or a string is held tightly at each end by a spectator. The performer lightly taps the cane with the ring, and the ring suddenly is seen to be encircling the cane. How did the ring pass the spectator's two hands and get on the cane? The most mystifying trick ever invented. Others charge 75 cents for this trick; but our price, including instructions, is 12 cents.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.

## THE HINDOO WHIRLER.



A white-wood, notched stick, 8-12 inches long, with a pivot at the end, on which a metal arm revolves. Your friend scrapes the notches with a toothpick, but he cannot make the metal arm spin unless he understands the secret. You can scrape the stick in a certain way, and the metal whirls to the right. Scrape the same way, and at the word of command you can make it revolve in the opposite direction. A mystifying novelty which will puzzle and amuse everybody. Price, 10 cents, postpaid.

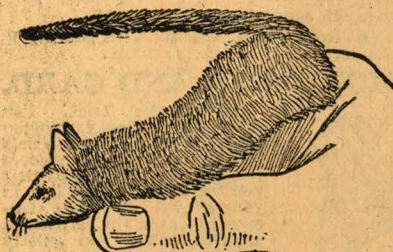
M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

## METEOR FOUNTAIN PEN.

— A perfect fountain pen for 35 cents. Why pay \$1 or \$2 for a fountain pen when we will sell you one that will do just as good service for one-fourth the amount. This pen is made in Germany. The handle is made of vulcanized rubber, and the pen is self filling. You have simply to dip the point of pen in your inkstand and turn the screw a few times to the right, which fills the reservoir without any soiling of hands. When ready to write you turn the screw slightly to the left, which permits the ink to flow freely to the pen. Each pen in a handsome gold-lettered box, with directions for use in six different languages, including English.

Price, 35 cents, or 2 for 60 cents, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO.,  
29 WEST 26TH STREET, N. Y.



**FINGER MOUSE.**—We need hardly tell you about this great novelty. It has proven one of the greatest sellers ever put on the market. The men on the street have sold nearly a million and every day the demand for them is growing. The head is like a mouse in every respect. The "body" is also like a mouse but is hollow, allowing the index finger to slip into it. While you are sitting at the dinner table—one of your friends who is "in on the trick" says she just saw a mouse and a moment or two after, the head of the mouse is seen to creep up over the edge of the table. Can you imagine the surprise and consternation? There are a thousand other stunts you can play with this mouse, such as slipping it out of your sleeve, your pockets, etc. This trick is very popular with the ladies. Price by mail, 10c.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.

## THE ELK HEAD PUZZLE.



**PATENTED**

Just out, and one of the most fascinating puzzles on the market. The stunt is to separate the antlers and rejoin them. It looks easy, but try it and you will admit that it is without exception the best puzzle you have ever seen. You can't leave it alone. Made of silvered metal.

Price, 12 cents; 3 for 30 cents, sent by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



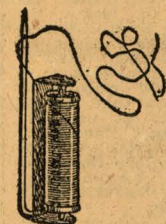
**FIFFI.**—Also known as a Japanese butterfly. A pleasing novelty enclosed in an envelope. When the envelope is opened Fiffi will fly out through the air for several yards. Made of colored paper to represent a butterfly, six inches wide.

Price, 10c.  
M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

## RAVELLING JOKE

YARDS UPON YARDS OF LAUGHS

**DON'T MISS IT! DON'T MISS IT!**  
EVERYONE FALLS FOR THIS ONE



It consists of a nice little bobbin around which is wound a spool of thread. You pin the bobbin under the lapel of your coat, and pull the end of the thread through your button hole, then watch your friends try to pick the piece of thread off your coat.

**ENOUGH SAID! GET ONE!**

Price 12 Cents Each. Postage Stamps Taken Same as Money.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



**RUBBER TACKS.**—They come six in a box. A wonderful imitation of the real tack. Made of rubber. The box in which they come is the ordinary tack box. This is a great parlor entertainer and you can play a lot of tricks with the tacks. Place them in the palm of your hand, point upward. Then slap the other hand over the tacks and it will seem as if you are committing suicide. Or you can show the tacks and then put them in your mouth and chew them, making believe you have swallowed them. Your friends will think you are a magician. Then, again, you can exhibit the tacks and then quickly push one in your cheek or somebody else's cheek and they will shriek with fear. Absolutely harmless and a very practical and funny joke. Price by mail, 10c. a box of 6 tacks; 3 boxes for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

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- 463 Young Wild West Shooting for His Life; or, Arietta's Able Assistance.
- 464 Young Wild West and "18-Carat Dan"; or, The Dandy "Bad" Man of Gilt Edge.
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